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THE POEMS OF WILLIAM WATSON VOLUME TWO

THE POEMS OF WILLIAM WATSON

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IN TWO VOLUMES

VOLUME TWO

9x6.f.5

JOHN LANE THE BODLEY HEAD
LONDON & NEW YORK. MDCCCCV

54220

WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS, LIMITED, LONDON AND BECCLES.

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[*The pieces marked with an asterisk have not appeared before in book form.*]

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MISCELLANEOUS SONNETS

NIGHT ON CURBAR EDGE

No echo of man's life pursues my ears ;
Nothing disputes this Desolation's reign ;
Change comes not, this dread temple to profane
Where time by æons reckons, not by years.
Its patient form one crag, sole stranded, rears,
Type of whate'er is destined to remain
While yon still host encamped on night's waste plain
Keeps armèd watch, a million quivering spears.

Hushed are the wild and wing'd lives of the moor ;
The sleeping sheep nestle 'neath ruined wall,
Or unhewn stones in random concourse hurled :
Solitude, sleepless, listens at Fate's door ;
And there is built and 'stablisht over all
Tremendous silence, older than the world.

MISCELLANEOUS SONNETS

CHRISTMAS DAY

THE morn broke bright: the thronging people wore
Their best; but in the general face I saw
No touch of veneration or of awe.
Christ's natal day? 'Twas merely one day more
On which the mart agreed to close its door;
A lounging-time by usage and by law
Sanctioned; nor recked they, beyond this, one straw
Of any meaning which for man it bore!

Fated among time's fallen leaves to stray,
We breathe an air that savours of the tomb,
Heavy with dissolution and decay;
Waiting till some new world-emotion rise,
And with the shattering might of the simoom
Sweep clean this dying Past that never dies.

BARREN LEVITY

I THINK the immortal servants of mankind,
Who, from their graves, watch by how slow degrees
The World-Soul greatens with the centuries,
Mourn most Man's barren levity of mind,
The ear to no grave harmonies inclined,
The witless thirst for false wit's worthless lees,
The laugh mistimed in tragic presences,
The eye to all majestic meanings blind.

O prophets, martyrs, saviours, *ye* were great,
All truth being great to you : ye deemed Man more
Than a dull jest, God's ennui to amuse :
The world, for you, held purport : Life ye wore
Proudly, as Kings their solemn robes of state ;
And humbly, as the mightiest monarchs use.

PEACE AND WAR

THE sleek sea, gorged and sated, basking lies ;
The cruel creature fawns and blinks and purrs ;
And almost we forget what fangs are hers,
And trust for once her emerald-golden eyes ;
Though haply on the morrow she shall rise
And summon her infernal ministers,
And charge her everlasting barriers,
With wild white fingers snatching at the skies.

So, betwixt Peace and War, man's life is cast ;
Yet hath he dreamed of perfect Peace at last
Shepherding all the nations ev'n as sheep.
The inconstant, moody ocean shall as soon,
At the cold dictates of the bloodless moon,
Swear an eternity of halcyon sleep.

ESTRANGEMENT

So, without overt breach, we fall apart,
Tacitly sunder—neither you nor I
Conscious of one intelligible Why,
And both, from severance, winning equal smart.
So, with resigned and acquiescent heart,
Whene'er your name on some chance lip may lie,
I seem to see an alien shade pass by,
A spirit wherein I have no lot or part.
Thus may a captive, in some fortress grim,
From casual speech betwixt his warders, learn
That June on her triumphal progress goes
Through arched and bannered woodlands; while for him
She is a legend emptied of concern,
And idle is the rumour of the rose.

AT THE GRAVE OF CHARLES LAMB, IN EDMONTON

Not here, O teeming City, was it meet
Thy lover, thy most faithful, should repose,
But where the multitudinous life-tide flows
Whose ocean-murmur was to him more sweet
Than melody of birds at morn, or bleat
Of flocks in Spring-time, *there* should Earth enclose
His earth, amid thy thronging joys and woes,
There, 'neath the music of thy million feet.
In love of thee this lover knew no peer.
Thine eastern or thy western fane had made
Fit habitation for his noble shade.
Mother of mightier far, of none more dear,
Not here, in rustic purlieus, O not here,
Thy Elia like an exile should be laid!

TO AUBREY DE VERE

Poet, whose grave and strenuous lyre is still
For Truth and Duty strung; whose art eschews
The lighter graces of the softer Muse,
Disdainful of mere craftsman's idle skill:
Yours is a soul from visionary hill
Watching and hearkening for ethereal news,
Looking beyond life's storms and death's cold dews
To habitations of the eternal will.

Not mine your mystic creed; not mine, in prayer
And worship, at the ensanguined Cross to kneel;
But when I mark your faith how pure and fair,
How based on love, on passion for man's weal,
My mind, half envying what it cannot share,
Reveres the reverence which it cannot feel.

TO EDWARD CLODD

FRIEND, in whose friendship I am twice well-starred,
A debt not time may cancel is your due;
For was it not your praise that earliest drew,
On me obscure, that chivalrous regard,
Ev'n his, who, knowing fame's first steep how hard,
With generous lips no faltering clarion blew,
Bidding men hearken to a lyre by few
Heeded, nor grudge the bay to one more bard?
Bitter the task, year by inglorious year,
Of suitor at the world's reluctant ear.
One cannot sing for ever, like a bird,
For sole delight of singing! Him his mate
Suffices, listening with a heart elate;
Nor more his joy, if all the rapt heav'n heard.

WRITTEN IN MR. SIDNEY LEE'S 'LIFE OF SHAKESPEARE'

Lee, who in niggard soil hast delved, to find
What things soever may be known or guessed
Of him that to the ages gives no rest,
The world-watched secret peak of human mind;
Thy choice was well, who leav'st to fools and blind
All visionary, vague, fantastic quest.
None to the Presence hath more nearly pressed,
Nor hast thou him dis-served to serve mankind.

'Tis said of certain poets, that writ large
Their sombre names on tragic stage and tome,
They are gulfs or estuaries of Shakespeare's sea.
Lofty the praise; and honour enough, to be
As children playing by his mighty marge,
Glorious with casual sprinklings of the foam.

TO THOMAS BAILEY ALDRICH, IN ANSWER TO HIS SONNET 'ON READING "THE PURPLE EAST"'

IDLE the churlish leagues 'twixt you and me,
Singer most rich in charm, most rich in grace!
What though I cannot see you face to face?
Allow my boast, that one in blood are we!
One by that secret consanguinity
Which binds the children of melodious race,
And knows not the fortuities of place,
And cold interposition of the sea.
You are my noble kinsman in the lyre:
Forgive the kinsman's freedom that I use,
Adventuring these imperfect thanks, who late,
Singing a nation's woe, in wonder and ire,—
Against me half the wise and all the great,—
Sang not alone, for with me was your muse.

TO JOHN CHURTON COLLINS

Collins, that with the elect of Greece and Rome
Dost daily in familiar converse dwell—
Have I not sat, long after bell on bell
Hath tolled the noon of night from spire and dome,
To hear you summon from their shadowy home
The laurelled ghosts obedient to your spell ?
Bards from the fields of deathless asphodel,
And one with locks white as the Chian foam.

Oft be it mine, at your fireside, to meet
The phantoms that assail not, nor alarm ;
The gracious lyrist of the Sabine farm,
Coming cool-thoughted from that green retreat ;
Or loftier Mantuan, more divinely sweet,
Lord of the incommunicable charm.

ON EXAGGERATED DEFERENCE TO FOREIGN LITERARY OPINION

WHAT! and shall *we*, with such submissive airs
As age demands in reverence from the young,
Await these crumbs of praises from Europe flung,
And doubt of our own greatness till it bears
The signet of your Goethes or Voltaires?
We who alone in latter times have sung
With scarce less power than Arno's exiled tongue—
We who are Milton's kindred, Shakespeare's heirs.
The prize of lyric victory who shall gain
If ours be not the laurel, ours the palm?
More than the froth and flotsam of the Seine,
More than your Hugo-flare against the night,
And more than Weimar's proud elaborate calm,
One flash of Byron's lightning, Wordsworth's light.

ABDICATION

I THINK you never were of earthly frame,
O truant from some charmèd world unknown!
A fairy empress, you forsook your throne,
Fled your inviolate court, and hither came;
Donned mortal vesture; wore a woman's name;
Like a mere woman, loved; and so are grown
At last a little human, save alone
For the wild elvish heart not Love could tame.
And one day I believe you will return
To your far isle amid the enchanted sea,—
There, in your realm, perhaps remember me,
Perhaps forget: but I shall never learn!
I, loveless dust within a dreamless urn,
Dead to your beauty's immortality.

WRITTEN IN A COPY OF MR. STEVENSON'S 'CATRIONA'

Glorious Sir Walter, Shakespeare's brother-brain,
Fortune's invincible victor-victim, Scott,
Mere lettered fame, 'tis said, esteeming not,
Save as it ministered to weightier gain,
Had yet his roseate dream, though dreamed in vain;
The dream, that, crowning his terrestrial lot,
A race of great and splendid heirs, begot
Of his own loins, o'er Abbotsford should reign.

The Fates forbad, but promised, in amends,
One mighty scion of his heart and mind:
And where strange isles the languid ocean fleck,—
Far from the cold kiss of our northern wind,—
Lo the rare spirit through whom we hail as friends
The immortal Highland maid and Alan Breck!

TO ——, WITH A VOLUME OF VERSE

If, on these pale and trembling blooms, full soon
The winter of oblivion should descend,
Remember, it was in my summer's noon
I gave you the poor posy, gentle friend.
Remember, how a fickle gust of praise
Ruffled my foliage in that perished time,
And by the after-light of these dead days
Read once again my world-forgotten rhyme.
Say: 'Fame his mistress was; he wooed her long,
She toyed with him an hour—and flung him by:
With me alone the memory of his song
Reluctant fades, and hesitates to die.'—
Then burn the book, that eyes less kind than those
Vex not the haunted dusk of its repose.

THE EMPTY NEST

I SAUNTER all about the pleasant place
You made thrice pleasant, O my friends, to me;
But you are gone where laughs in radiant grace
That thousand-memoried unimpulsive sea.
To storied precincts of the southern foam,
Dear birds of passage, ye have taken wing,
And ah! for me, when April wafts you home,
The spring will more than ever be the spring.
Still lovely, as of old, this haunted ground;
Tenderly still, the autumn sunshine falls;
And gorgeously the woodlands tower around,
Freak'd with wild light at golden intervals:
Yet, for the ache your absence leaves, O friends,
Earth's lifeless pageantries are poor amends.

THE MOCK SELF

Few friends are mine, though many wights there be
Who, meeting oft a phantasm that makes claim
To be myself, and hath my face and name,
And whose thin fraud I wink at privily,
Account this light impostor very me.
What boots it undeceive them, and proclaim
Myself myself, and whelm this cheat with shame?
I care not, so he leave my true self free,
Impose not on me also; but alas!
I too, at fault, bewildered, sometimes take
Him for myself, and far from mine own sight,
Torpid, indifferent, doth mine own self pass;
And yet anon leaps suddenly awake,
And spurns the gibbering mime into the night.

TO ŌNE WHO HAD WRITTEN IN DERISION OF THE BELIEF IN IMMORTALITY

Dismiss not so, with light hard phrase and cold,
Ev'n if it be but fond imagining,
The hope whereto so passionately cling
The dreaming generations from of old!
Not thus, to luckless men, are tidings told
Of mistress lost, or riches taken wing;
And is eternity a slighter thing,
To have or lose, than kisses or than gold?

Nay, tenderly, if needs thou must, disprove
My loftiest fancy, dash my grand desire
To see this curtain lift, these clouds retire,
And Truth, a boundless dayspring, blaze above
And round me; and to ask of my dead sire
His pardon for a word that wronged his love.

TO A FRIEND UNITING ANTIQUARIAN TASTES WITH PROGRESSIVE POLITICS

True lover of the Past, who dost not scorn
To give good heed to what the Future saith,—
Drinking the air of two worlds at a breath,
Thou livest not alone in thoughts outworn,
But ever helpest the new time be born,
Though with a sigh for the old order's death
As clouds that crown the night that perisheth
Aid in the high solemnities of morn.

Guests of the ages, at To-morrow's door
Why shrink we? The long track behind us lies,
The lamps gleam and the music throbs before,
Bidding us enter: and I count him wise,
Who loves so well Man's noble memories
He needs must love Man's nobler hopes yet more.

THE FRONTIER

At the hushed brink of twilight,—when, as though
Some solemn journeying phantom paused to lay
An ominous finger on the awestruck day,
Earth holds her breath till that great presence go,—
A moment comes of visionary glow,
Pendulous 'twixt the gold hour and the grey,
Lovelier than these, more eloquent than they
Of memory, foresight, and life's ebb and flow.

So have I known, in some fair woman's face,
While viewless yet was Time's more gross imprint,
The first, faint, hesitant, elusive hint
Of that invasion of the vandal years
Seem deeper beauty than youth's cloudless grace,
Wake subtler dreams, and touch me nigh to tears.

IN CITY PENT

O, SWEET at this sweet hour to wander free,
Or follow some invisible-beckoning hand,
Among the moody mountains, where they stand
Awed with the thought of their own majesty!
Sweet, at the folding-up of day, to be
Where, on the tattered fringes of the land,
The uncourted flowers of the penurious sand
Are pale against the pale lips of the sea.
Sweetest to dream, on easeful earth reclined,
Far in some forest's ancient idleness,
Under the shadow of its bossy boles;
Beyond the world's pursuit and Care's access;
And hear the wild feet of the elfin wind
Dancing and prancing in mad caprioles.

MELANCHOLIA

In the cold starlight, on the barren beach,
Where to the stones the rent sea-tresses clave,
I heard the long hiss of the backward wave
Down the steep shingle, and the hollow speech
Of murmurous cavern-lips, nor other breach
Of ancient silence. None was with me, save
Thoughts that were neither glad nor sweet nor brave,
But restless comrades, each the foe of each.
And I beheld the waters in their might
Writhe as a dragon by some great spell curbed
And foiled; and one lone sail; and over me
The everlasting taciturnity;
The august, inhospitable, inhuman night,
Glittering magnificently unperturbed.

THE REIGN OF THE MUSE

WHEN Life was dewy and in morning mood,
Then was indeed the Muse's golden reign;
When gods and heroes stept from sculptor's brain,
And perfect with a great perfection stood;
When poets saw the world, that it was good,
Worthy a noble and a limpid strain;
And secret Night, and the unravished main,
Kept holy their mysterious maidenhood.

O happy singers of that vernal day!
Fled is the simple, bounded world ye saw;
Those gods, that never dashed the soul with awe,
Sunny Imaginations, fled are they;
And on Olympus, blind and ruthless Law
Holds unadored his adamantine sway.

SHELLEY

'Twas said the gods, when they Porphyrion slew,
And vast Enceladus under Etna laid,
Could conquer only with a mortal's aid
These mortal giants and their snakish crew.
Behold a spirit all fire and air and dew,
Who, being of heaven, a heavenly error made:
To crush the earthborn giants he essayed,
Wholly without ally of earthborn thew.
Therefore he conquered not. For in man's mind,
The wrath celestial that would monsters slay
Must needs a lowlier-sprung confederate find,
And charge with an auxiliary of clay.
Then only are these Powers, their might combined,
Then only and thus, invincible as Day.

THE MODERN SADNESS

Old Chaucer; the unconquerably young,
Methought thou camest by, and didst incline
An ear to these poor fitful notes of mine,
And didst reprove, albeit with gentle tongue,
A lyre to joyous mood so seldom strung—
So little vowed to laughter or the vine,
Or her that rose a goddess from the brine,
Mother of half the songs the world hath sung.

Blandly arraigning ghost! 'tis all too true,—
A want of joy doth in these strings reside;
Some shade, that troubled not thy clearer day,
Some loss, nor thou nor thy Boccaccio knew.
For thou art of the morning and the May—
I of the autumn and the eventide.

SONG'S APOSTASY

WHEN is the Muse most lustily acclaimed?
When she in paths not native goes astray,
There to disown her record if she may,
Deny her lineage, turn as one ashamed
From all she was, and all that once was famed
To be her realm and birthright. Yet to-day,
Her need is rather to retrace her way
To where of old her steadfast signal flamed;
Thence counting it her glory to bestow
On man the things he is poor in, not the things
Life spawns for ever with a rank excess;
To teach him beauty and not ugliness,
The upward not the downward truth; and so
To the mountains lead him, and the cold clear springs.

TO A STATESMAN AND MAN OF LETTERS

'Tis told how Atlas, putting off the weight
Of Heaven, and sent by Theban Herakles
For the gold apples of the Hesperides,
Came back reluctant to his skiey freight,
All unsubmissive to the load, that late
Had bowed his shoulders and had bent his knees,
While the gods wooed or hunted, or at ease
Smiled from their cloudland, uncompassionate.

Men say, you leave full loth the clime and soil
Of realms serene, where no loud combats ring,
To bear the fardel of a public toil,
After Hesperidean sojourning.
Who shall reproach? Not we to whom you bring
The golden fruit, this rich and peaceful spoil.

NIGHT AND TIME

On a grey city I looked down, where strove
Britain with Rome, and Saxon warred with Dane,
And faith to faith succeeded, fane to fane;
Where haply, shrined in immemorial grove,
Some god of dayspring faded before Jove;
Where Jove to Christ, where Christ's to Odin's reign,
Did yield; and Odin bowed to Christ again;
And each a darkness round a darkness wove.

And Silence was abroad, and Dreams went by;
And hearthfires paled and faltered and died out,
As dying gods had paled to ghosts and fled;
And a blear mist came slowly up like Doubt;
And there was only Night, and Time, and I,
And city upon city of the dead.

ECCE HOMO

The Cross, the crown of thorns, the anguished eyes,
The cruel wounds unstaunched and bleeding yet—
Ever the same wan form before me set,
All out of tune with the proud, glorying skies!
O, were it not to-day at last more wise
In his immortal greatness to forget
The mortal agony and bloody sweat,
And in his living words the dying cries?
What is to me this show of wounds and death?
To me his death is nought, his life is all!
The one no word of hourly purport saith;
The other, at morn and noon and evenfall,
Rallies me to him with a trumpet's call—
Him, not of Calvary, but of Nazareth.

SACRIFICE

WHEN, in Moriah, the Lord His servant proved,
Bidding him slay his only son; or when
Heaven asked of Agamemnon, King of men,
Iphigenia, his daughter well beloved;
This thought, through forms and symbols far removed,
Brake without cloud upon the human ken:
If one thing in thy heart sit throned, 'tis then
Thy worthiest gift for God, and best approved.

But when the temple's veil in twain was riven,
And that untimely night amazed the sun,
All this on Calvary was reversed, undone,
Something by man disprized to God being given.
Was not the older way the grander one—
Man with his dearest treasure dowering Heaven?

CROMWELL

LATE was the Voice that called thee forth to fame,
O mighty Captain. When the tempest rose,
Thou didst awake and arm thee for thy foes.
Then, labour, warfare, triumph, power, acclaim ;
The height that was a throne in all but name ;
And after lordly life a kingly close.
Then, foul dishonour done to thy repose.
And then, how slow ! the adjudging ages came.

And art thou summed at last and measured ? Nay.
For what is princely puissance ? 'Tis to stand
On tops and turrets of the blazing day,
Thy speech and acts all naked, thou alone
Concealed ; thou only, save to Him that planned
The labyrinthine hearts of kings, unknown.

FOR ENGLAND

Of all great deaths on English ground, thine most,
Simon de Montfort, doth my spirit stir.
Thou fought'st for England and didst die for her,
Thyself of other race, from outland coast.
Law's mandatory and Freedom's, thou thy host
Didst hurl against a sceptred law-breaker;
Nor didst thou blench when, black from plume to spur,
Rode Fate on Evesham field, and all was lost.
Then for their lives thou bad'st thy noblest fly:
'Thou dying we would not live,' they made reply,
And dauntless round thy dauntlessness were mown;
And thou with wrath that hewed its way on high
Fell'st fighting the steep fight of Liberty,
In a crashing forest of the foe, alone.

TO ABERDEEN

(April, 1904)

At the great dance and upleap of the year,
I came. For me, the northwind's cold accost
Was all day long in thy warm welcome lost.
How should I fail henceforth to hold thee dear?
Hoary thy countenance and thy mien severe,
And built of the bones of Mother Earth thou wast,
But on thy heart hath fall'n no touch of frost,
O City of the pallid brow austere.
Grey, wintry-featured, sea-throned Aberdeen!
The stranger thou hast honoured shall not cease,
In whatsoever ways he rest or roam,
To wish thee noble fortune, fame serene:
Thee and thy towers of learning and of peace,
That brood benignant on the northern foam.

SONNETS ON PUBLIC AFFAIRS

GORDON

Arab, Egyptian, English—by the sword
Cloven, or pierced with spears, or bullet-mown—
In equal fate they sleep ; their dust is grown
A portion of the fiery sands abhorred.
And thou, what hast thou, hero, for reward,
Thou, England's glory and her shame ? O'er-
thrown
Thou liest, unburied, or with grave unknown
As his to whom on Nebo's height the Lord
Showed all the land of Gilead, unto Dan ;
Judah sea-fringed ; Manasseh and Ephraim ;
And Jericho palmy, to where Zoar lay ;
And in a valley of Moab buried him,
Over against Beth-Peor, but no man
Knows of his sepulchre unto this day.

April, 1885.

HOME-ROOTEDNESS

I CANNOT boast myself cosmopolite ;
I own to 'insularity,' although
'Tis fall'n from fashion, as full well I know.
For somehow, being a plain and simple wight,
I am skin-deep a child of the new light,
But chiefly am mere Englishman below,
Of island-fostering ; and can hate a foe,
And trust my kin before the Muscovite.
Whom shall I trust if not my kin ? And whom
Account so near in natural bonds as these
Born of my mother England's mighty womb,
Nursed on my mother England's mighty knees,
And lull'd as I was lull'd in glory and gloom
With cradle-song of her protecting seas ?

April, 1885.

REPORTED CONCESSIONS

So we must palter, falter, cringe, and shrink,
And when the bully threatens, crouch or fly.—
There are who tell me with a shuddering eye
That war's red cup is Satan's chosen drink.
Who shall gainsay them? Verily I do think
War is as hateful almost, and well-nigh
As ghastly, as this terrible Peace whereby
We halt for ever on the crater's brink
And feed the wind with phrases, while we know
There gapes at hand the infernal precipice
O'er which a gossamer bridge of words we throw,
Yet cannot choose but hear from the abyss
The sulphurous gloom's unfathomable hiss
And simmering lava's subterranean flow.

April, 1885.

OUR EASTERN TREASURE

In cobwebb'd corners dusty and dim I hear
A thin voice pipingly revived of late,
Which saith our India is a cumbrous weight,
An idle decoration, bought too dear.
The wiser world contemns not gorgeous gear;
Just pride is no mean factor in a State;
The sense of greatness keeps a nation great;
And mighty they who mighty can appear.
It may be that if hands of greed could steal
From England's grasp the envied orient prize,
This tide of gold would flood her still as now:
But were she the same England, made to feel
A brightness gone from out those starry eyes,
A splendour from that constellated brow?

April, 1885.

NIGHTMARE

(Written during apparent Imminence of War)

In a false dream I saw the Foe prevail.
The war was ended ; the last smoke had rolled
Away : and we, erewhile the strong and bold,
Stood broken, humbled, withered, weak and pale,
And moan'd, 'Our greatness is become a tale
To tell our children's babes when we are old.
They shall put by their playthings to be told
How England once, before the years of bale,
Throned above trembling, puissant, grandiose, calm,
Held Asia's richest jewel in her palm ;
And with unnumbered isles barbaric, she
The broad hem of her glistering robe impearl'd ;
Then, when she wound her arms about the world,
And had for vassal the obsequious sea.'

April, 1885.

THE IDEAL POPULAR LEADER

He is one who counts no public toil so hard
As idly glittering pleasures ; one controlled
By no mob's haste, nor swayed by gods of gold ;
Prizing, not courting, all just men's regard ;
With none but Manhood's ancient Order starred,
Nor crowned with titles less august and old
Than human greatness ; large-brained, limpid-souled ;
Whom dreams can hurry not, nor doubts retard ;
Born, nurtured of the People ; living still
The People's life ; and though their noblest flower,
In nought removed above them, save alone
In loftier virtue, wisdom, courage, power,
The ampler vision, the serener will,
And the fixed mind, to no light dallyings prone.

AFTER THE TITANS

ENGLAND, in good Victoria's latter reign,
Two potent councillors by turns have led,
Little alike in build of heart or head,
Yet owning this resemblance,—that the twain
Are visibly of Britain's ancient strain,
Sprung of the lineage of her stalwart dead,
Strong souls and massive, such as England bred
In the brave day that cometh not again.

To these succeeds another, newer race,
Men light and slight, on narrower scale designed,
Offspring and image of the change we trace
In art, arms, action, manners, morals, mind,—
The burly oak departing, in its place
The lissom willow, swaying to the wind.

SONNETS ON PUBLIC AFFAIRS

FRANCE *

LIGHT-HEARTED heroine of tragic story !
Nation whom storm on storm of ruining fate,
Unruined leaves,—nay, fairer, more elate,
Hungrier for action, more athirst for glory !
World-witching queen, from fiery floods and gory
Rising eternally regenerate,
Clothed with great deeds and crowned with dreams
more great,
Spacious as Fancy's boundless territory !
Little thou lov'st our island, and perchance
Thou heed'st as little her reluctant praise ;
Yet let her, in these dark and bodeful days,
Sinking old hatreds 'neath the sundering brine,
Immortal and indomitable France,
Marry her tears, her alien tears, to thine.

25th June, 1894, the day after the murder of President Carnot.

THE WORLD IN ARMOUR

I

UNDER this shade of crimson wings abhorred
That never wholly leaves the sky serene,—
While Vengeance sleeps a sleep so light, between
Dominions that acclaim Thee overlord,—
Sadly the blast of Thy tremendous word,
Whate'er its mystic purport may have been,
Echoes across the ages, Nazarene:
Not to bring peace Mine errand, but a sword.

For lo, Thy world uprises and lies down
In armour, and its Peace is War, in all
Save the great death that weaves War's dreadful crown;
War unennobled by heroic pain,
War where none triumph, none sublimely fall,
War that sits smiling, with the eyes of Cain.

SONNETS ON PUBLIC AFFAIRS

II

When London's Plague, that day by day enrolled
His thousands dead, nor deigned his rage to abate
Till grass was green in silent Bishopsgate,
Had come and passed like thunder,—still, 'tis told,
The monster, driven to earth, in hovels old
And haunts obscure, though dormant, lingered late,
Till the dread Fire, one roaring wave of fate,
Rose, and swept clean his last retreat and hold.

In Europe live the dregs of Plague to-day,
Dregs of full many an ancient Plague and dire,—
Old wrongs, old lies of ages blind and cruel.
What if alone the world-war's world-wide fire
Can purge the ambushed pestilence away?
Yet woe to him that idly lights the fuel!

III

A moment's fantasy, the vision came
Of Europe dipped in fiery death, and so
Mounting re-born, with vestal limbs aglow,
Splendid and fragrant from her bath of flame.

It fleeted ; and a phantom without name,
Sightless, dismembered, terrible, said : 'Lo,
I am that ravished Europe men shall know
After the morn of blood and night of shame.

The spectre passed, and I beheld alone
The Europe of the present, as she stands,
Powerless from terror of her own vast power,
'Neath novel stars, beside a brink unknown ;
And round her the sad Kings, with sleepless hands,
Piling the fagots, hour by doomful hour.

SONNETS ON PUBLIC AFFAIRS

TO A LADY, WITH THE AUTHOR'S SONNETS ENTITLED 'THE PURPLE EAST'

DAUGHTER of Ireland,—nay, 'twere better said,
Daughter of Ireland's beauty, Ireland's grace,
Child of her charm, of her romance; whose face
Is legendary with her glories fled!
The shadow of her living griefs and dead
I pray you to put by a little space,
And mourn with me an ancient Orient race
Outcast and doomed and disinherited.

Though Wrong be strong, though thrones be built on crimes,
To know you, Lady, is to doubt no more
That in the world are mightier powers than these;
That heaven, the ocean, gains on earth, the shore;
And that deformity and hate are Time's,
And love and loveliness Eternity's.

THE TURK IN ARMENIA

WHAT profits it; O England, to prevail
In arts and arms, and mighty realms subdue,
And ocean with thine argosies bestrew,
And wrest thy tribute from each golden gale,
If idly thou must hearken to the wail
Of women martyred by the turbaned crew
Whose tenderest mercy was the sword that slew,
And hazard not the dinting of thy mail?
We deemed of old thou held'st a charge from Him
Who sits companioned by His seraphim,
To smite the wronger with thy destined rod.
Wait'st thou His sign? Enough, the unanswered cry
Of virgin souls for vengeance, and on high
The gathering blackness of the frown of God!

HOW LONG?

HEAPED in their ghastly graves they lie, the breeze
Sickening o'er fields where others vainly wait
For burial: and the butchers keep high state
In silken palaces of perfumed ease.
The panther of the desert, matched with these,
Is pitiful; beside their lust and hate,
Fire and the plague-wind are compassionate,
And soft the fang'd lips of the ravening seas.
How long shall they be borne? Is not the cup
Of crime yet full? Doth devildom still lack
Some consummating crown, that we hold back
The scourge, and in Christ's borders give them room?
How long shall they be borne, O England? Up,
Tempest of God, and sweep them to their doom!

REPUDIATED RESPONSIBILITY

I HAD not thought to hear it voiced so plain,
Uttered so forthright, on their lips who steer
This nation's course: I had not thought to hear
That word re-echoed by an English thane,
Guilt's maiden-speech when first a man lay slain,
'Am I my brother's keeper?' Yet full near
It sounded, and the syllables rang clear
As the immortal rhetoric of Cain.
'Wherefore should *we*, sirs, more than they—or they—
Unto these helpless reach a hand to save?'
An Englishman, in this our English air,
Speaking for England? Then indeed her day
Slopes to its twilight, and, for Honour, there
Is needed but a requiem, and a grave.

THE KNELL OF CHIVALRY

O VANISHED morn of crimson and of gold,
O youth and roselight and romance, wherein
I read of paynim and of paladin,
And Beauty snatched from ogre's dungeoned hold!
Ever the recreant, then, in dust was rolled,
Ever the true knight in the joust did win,
Ever the scaly shape of monstrous Sin
At last lay vanquished, fold on writhing fold.
Was it all false, that world of princely deeds,
The splendid quest, the good fight ringing clear?
Yonder the Dragon ramps with fiery gorge,
Yonder the victim faints and gasps and bleeds;
But in his merry England our St. George
Sleeps a base sleep beside his idle spear.

ENGLAND TO AMERICA

O TOWERING daughter, Titan of the West,
Behind a thousand leagues of foam secure;
Thou toward whom our inmost heart is pure
Of ill intent: although thou threatenest
With most unfilial hand thy mother's breast,
Not for one breathing-space may Earth endure
The thought of War's intolerable cure
For such vague pains as vex to-day thy rest!
But if thou hast more strength than thou canst spend
In tasks of Peace, and find'st her yoke too tame,
Help us to smite the cruel, to befriend
The succourless, and put the false to shame.
So shall the ages laud thee, and thy name
Be lovely among nations to the end.

THE TIRED LION

SPEAK once again, with that great note of thine,
Hero withdrawn from Senates and their sound
Unto thy home by Cambria's northern bound,—
Speak once again, and wake a world supine.
Not always, not in all things, was it mine
To follow where thou led'st: but who hath found
Another man so shod with fire, so crowned
With thunder, and so armed with wrath divine?
Lift up thy voice once more! The nation's heart
Is cold as Anatolia's mountain snows.
O, from these alien paths of base repose
Call back thy England, ere thou too depart—
Ere, on some secret mission, thou too start
With silent footsteps, whither no man knows.

A TRIAL OF ORTHODOXY

THE clinging children at their mother's knee
Slain; and the sire and kindred one by one
Flayed or hewn piecemeal; and things nameless done,
Not to be told: while imperturbably
The nations gaze, where Rhine unto the sea,
Where Seine and Danube, Thames and Tiber run,
And where great armies glitter in the sun,
And great kings rule, and man is boasted free!
What wonder if yon torn and naked throng
Should doubt a Heaven that seems to wink and nod,
And having moaned at noontide, 'Lord, how long?'
Should cry, 'Where hidest Thou?' at evenfall,
At midnight, 'Is He deaf and blind, our God?'
And ere day dawn, 'Is He indeed at all?'

'IF'

YEA, if ye could not, though ye would, lift hand—
Ye halting leaders—to abridge Hell's reign ;
If, for some cause ye may not yet make plain,
Yearning to strike, ye stood as one may stand
Who in a nightmare sees a murder planned
And hurrying to its issue, and though fain
To stay the knife, and fearless, must remain
Madly inert, held fast by ghostly band ;—
If such your plight, most hapless ye of men !
But if ye could and would not, O, what plea,
Think ye, shall stead you at your trial, when
The thunder-cloud of witnesses shall loom,
With Ravished Childhood on the seat of doom,
At the Assizes of Eternity ?

TO THE SULTAN

Caliph, I did thee wrong. I hailed thee late
'Abdul the Damned,' and would recall my word.
It merged thee with the unillustrious herd
Who crowd the approaches to the infernal gate—
Spirits gregarious, equal in their state
As is the innumerable ocean bird,
Gannet or gull, whose wandering plaint is heard
On Ailsa or Iona desolate.
For, in a world where cruel deeds abound,
The merely damned are legion : with such souls
Is not each hollow and cranny of Tophet crammed?
Thou with the brightest of Hell's aureoles
Dost shine supreme, incomparably crowned,
Immortally, beyond all mortals, damned.

THE ENEMY

UNSKILLED in Letters, and in Arts unversed ;
Ignorant of empire ; bounded in their view
By the lone billowing veldt, where they upgrew
Amid great silences ; a people nursed
Apart—the far-sown seed of them that erst
Not Alva's sword could tame : now, blindly hurled
Against the march of the majestic world,
They fight and die, with dauntless bosoms curst.

Crazed, if you will ; demented, not to yield
Ere all be lost ! And yet it seems to me
They fought as noblest Englishmen did use
To fight, for freedom ; and no Briton he,
Who to such valour in a desperate field
A knightly salutation can refuse.

FORCE AND FREEDOM

O, doubtless ye can trample and enchain;
Sow death and breathe out winter ; but can ye
Persuade the destined bondsman he is free,
Or with a signal build the summer again ?
O, ye can hold the rivulets of the plain
A little while from nuptials with the sea,
But the fierce mountain-stream of Liberty
Not edicts and not hosts may long restrain.
For this is of the heights and of the deeps,
Born of the heights and in the deeps conceived.
This, 'mid the lofty places of the mind,
Gushes pellucid, vehemently upheaved ;
And tears and heart's blood hallow it, as it sweeps
Invincibly on, co-during with mankind.

SONNETS ON PUBLIC AFFAIRS

TO ONE ESPOUSING UNPOPULAR TRUTH

Not yet, dejected though thy cause, despair,
Nor doubt of Dawn for all her laggard wing.
In shrewdest March the earth was mellowing,
And had conceived the Summer unaware.
With delicate ministration, like the air,
The sovereign forces that conspire to bring
Light out of darkness, out of Winter, Spring,
Perform unseen their tasks benign and fair.
The sower soweth seed o'er vale and hill,
And long the folded life waits to be born;
Yet hath it never slept, nor once been still:
And clouds and suns have served it night and morn;
The winds are of its secret council sworn;
And Time and nurturing Silence work its will.

THE INEXORABLE LAW

We too shall pass, we too shall disappear,
Ev'n as the mighty nations that have waned
And perished. Not more surely are ordained
The crescence and the cadence of the year,
High-hearted June, October spent and sere,
Than this grey consummation. We have reigned
Augustly; let our part be so sustained
That Time, far hence, shall hold our memory dear!
Let it be said: 'This Mistress of the sword
And conquering prow, this Empire swoln with spoils,
Yet served the human cause, yet strove for Man;
Hers was the purest greatness we record;
We whose ingathered sheaves her tilth foreran,
Whose peace comes of her tempests and her toils.'

THE SLAIN

PARTNERS in silence, mates in noteless doom,
Peers in oblivion's commonalty merged;
Unto like deeds by differing mandates urged,
And equalled in the unrespective tomb;
Leal or perfidious, cruel or tender, whom
Precipitate fate hath of your frailties purged;
Whom duly the impartial winds have dirged,
In autumn or the glorying vernal bloom:
Already is your strife become as nought;
Idle the bullet's flight, the bayonet's thrust,
The senseless cannon's dull, unmeaning word;
Idle your feud; and all for which ye fought
To this arbitrament of loam referred,
And cold adjudication of the dust.

TO THE PRINCE OF WALES (NOW KING EDWARD) ON HIS ESCAPE FROM ASSASSINATION

Sir, we have seen ill deeds and black-robed years.
The liberal Tsar that ever wrought or planned
His people's weal; and Carnot just and bland;
And Lincoln whom a continent reveres;
All these by parity of doom are peers;
With others high of place in many a land;
And her, most foully stricken on Leman's strand,
The imperial head grown grey in tragic tears.

Not theirs your fate: no dastard hand bereaves
Us of our kingliest: and we praise to-day
That wise detachment from the party fray,
That kindly thought which all that claims, receives!
These things we love, nor yet shall lack, we pray,
In happier times when Peace comes with her sheaves.

LA HAUTE POLITIQUE

I SAILED in fancy by a beach of gold,
Toward a golden city like a star,
That quivered on the morning from afar—
Turrets and domes and airy spires untold.
But when I neared the marble quays, behold,
Offal and ordure ; lurking Shames, that mar
The hue of sunlight ; Plagues that deadliest are;
And ancient Tribulations manifold.

So fair, so foul, I said, the craft of State !
Such is the glory, such the light that clings
About the footsteps and the deeds of kings ;
And in the shadow Terror sits, and Hate ;
The lazars crouch, the bravo lies in wait ;
And heaven is mocked with all unheavenly things.

MEN AS WARES

O MIGHTY Nation, must thou now depart
From all great ways, and having led the van
Of the world's hope, turn back and deal in Man,
Counting as merchandise the human heart,
Casting the soul as goods upon the mart?
And save the thunderstroke's monition, can
Nought give thee pause, nor lamp serener than
The lightning show thee by what brink thou art?

Vain for the Muse, whom no man heeds, to warn!
Silent upon her mountains let her stray,
Or murmur dirges for the loftier day,
And its heroic promise brought to scorn;
The brave ideals shipwrecked and forlorn,
And honour as a bauble flung away.

POEMS (OTHER THAN SONNETS) ON PUBLIC AFFAIRS

SKETCH OF A POLITICAL PERSONAGE

(1885)

THERE is a race of men, who master life,
Their victory being inversely as their strife;
Who capture by refraining from pursuit;
Shake not the bough, yet load their hands with fruit;
The earth's high places who attain to fill,
By most indomitably sitting still.
While others, full upon the fortress hurled,
Lay fiery siege to the embattled world,
Of such rude arts *their* natures feel no need;
Greatly inert, they lazily succeed;
Find in the golden mean their proper bliss,
And doing nothing, never do amiss;
But lapt in all men's praises live, and die
By all regretted, nobody knows why.

Cast in this fortunate Olympian mould,
The admirable * * * behold ;
Whom naught could dazzle or mislead, unless
'Twere the wild light of fatal cautiousness ;
Who never takes a step from his own door
But he looks backward ere he looks before.
When once he starts, 'twere rash indeed to say
That he will travel far upon his way :
But this is sure, he will not turn aside,
Or at the beck of Jack o' Lanthorn ride.
The flippant deem him dull and saturnine,
The summed-up phlegm of a whole ducal line ;
Others admire that sober mass and weight—
A simple Doric pillar of the State,
So inharmonious with the baser style
Of neighbouring columns grafted on the pile,
So proud and imperturbable and chill,
Chosen and matched so excellently ill,
He seems a monument of pensive grace,
Ah, how majestically out of place !

Would that some call he could not choose but heed—
Of private passion or of public need—
At last might sting to life that slothful power,
And snare him into greatness for an hour !

ENGLAND AND HER COLONIES

She stands a thousand-wintered tree,
By countless morns impearled;
Her broad roots coil beneath the sea,
Her branches sweep the world;
Her seeds, by careless winds conveyed,
Clothe the remotest strand
With forests from her scatterings made,
New nations fostered in her shade,
And linking land with land.

O ye by wandering tempest sown
'Neath every alien star,
Forget not whence the breath was blown
That wafted you afar!
For ye are still her ancient seed
On younger soil let fall—
Children of Britain's island-breed,
To whom the Mother in her need
Perchance may one day call.

1890.

A NEW YEAR'S PRAYER

In the blanched night, when all the world lay frore,
And the cold moon, the passionless, looked down
Commiserating man the passion-curst—
Man made in passion and by passion marred—
Through the pale silence, on the New Year's verge,
This prayer fled forth, and trembled up to heaven :—

'O Thou whose dwelling is eternity ;
Who seest the hunger and the toil of men,
And how the love of life and wife and babe
Is brother of hate and sire of deeds of death ;
Give peace—give peace : peace in our time, O Lord !

A NEW YEAR'S PRAYER

'But if we needs must march to peace through war,
Spare not the sowers who amid Thy corn
Mingled the lethal seed of this red flower.
Make terrible Thine arm against all thieves,
Whether in mart or on imperial throne;
And scatter with Thy thunder the unjust
Who turn Thy pleasance to a wilderness,
To battle-fields Thy vineyard, with mailed feet
Trampling the joyous vine of life in blood.

Purge and renew this England, fair of old,
When Alfred's wisdom poised the sacred scales;
Or when the high fanes lacked not hero-priests,
Langtons and Anselms, fearless friends of men;
Yea, and in later times, when Liberty,
Her crowned and crosiered enemies combating,
Stood proudlier 'stablished by a false king's fall,
Mighty from Milton's pen and Cromwell's sword.'

New Year's Eve, 1892.

A NEW NATIONAL ANTHEM

GOD save our ancient land,
God bless our noble land,
God save this land!
Yea, from war's pangs and fears,
Plague's tooth and famine's tears,
Ev'n unto latest years
God save this land!

God bless our reigning race!
Truth, honour, wisdom, grace,
Guide their right hand!
Yet, though we love their sway,
England is more than they:
God bless their realm, we pray,
God save our land!

Too long the gulf betwixt
This man and that man fixt
Yawns yet unspanned.

A NEW NATIONAL ANTHEM

Too long, that some may rest,
Tired millions toil unblest.
God lift our lowliest;
God save this land!

God save our ancient land,
God bless our noble land,
God save our land!
Earth's empires wax and wane,
Man's might is mown as grain:
God's arm our arm sustain!
God save our land!

EUROPE AT THE PLAY

O LANGUID audience, met to see
The last act of the tragedy
On that terrific stage afar,
Where burning towns the footlights are,—
O listless Europe, day by day
Callously sitting out the play!

So sat, with loveless count'nance cold,
Round the arena, Rome of old.
Pain, and the ebb of life's red tide,
So, with a calm regard, she eyed,
Her gorgeous vesture, million-pearled,
Splashed with the blood of half the world.
High was her glory's noon: as yet
She had not dreamed her sun could set;
As yet she had not dreamed how soon
Shadows should vex her glory's noon.

Another's pangs she counted nought ;
Of human hearts she took no thought ;
But God, at nightfall, in her ear
Thundered *His* thought exceeding clear.

Perchance in tempest and in blight,
On Europe, too, shall fall the night !
She sees the victim overborne,
By worse than ravening lions torn.
She sees, she hears, with soul unstirred,
And lifts no hand, and speaks no word,
But vaunts a brow like theirs who deem
Men's wrongs a phrase, men's rights a dream.
Yet haply she shall learn, too late,
In some blind hurricane of Fate,
How fierily alive the things
She held as fool's imaginings,
And, though circuitous and obscure,
The feet of Nemesis how sure.

HOW WEARY IS OUR HEART!

Of kings and courts; of kingly, courtly ways
In which the life of man is bought and sold;
How weary is our heart these many days!

Of ceremonious embassies that hold
Parley with Hell in fine and silken phrase,
How weary is our heart these many days!

Of wavering counsellors neither hot nor cold,
Whom from His mouth God speweth, be it told
How weary is our heart these many days!

Yea, for the ravelled night is round the lands,
And sick are we of all the imperial story.
The tramp of Power, and its long trail of pain;
The mighty brows in meanest arts grown hoary;
The mighty hands,
That in the dear, affronted name of Peace

HOW WEARY IS OUR HEART!

Bind down a people to be racked and slain ;
The emulous armies waxing without cease,
All-puissant all in vain ;
The pacts and leagues to murder by delays,
And the dumb throngs that on the deaf thrones
gaze ;
The common loveless lust of territory ;
The lips that only babble of their mart,
While to the night the shrieking hamlets blaze ;
The bought allegiance, and the purchased praise,
False honour, and shameful glory ;—
Of all the evil whereof this is part,
How weary is our heart,
How weary is our heart these many days !

THE AWAKENING

Behold, she is risen who lay asleep so long,
Our England, our Belovèd ! We have seen
The swelling of the waters, we have heard
The thundering cataracts call. Behold, she is risen,
Lovelier in resurrection than the face
Of vale or mountain, when, with storming tears,
At all Earth's portals knocks the importunate Spring.

We watched her sleeping. Day and night we strove
With the dread spell that drowsed her heart. And thrice
In the unrest of her sick dreams she stirred,
Half raised herself, half oped her lips and lids,
And thrice the evil charm prevailed, and thrice
She fell back forceless. But behold, she is risen,
The Hope of the World is risen, is risen anew.

THE AWAKENING

O England! O Belovèd! O Re-born!
Look that thou fall not upon sleep again!
Thou art a star among the nations yet:
Be thou a light of succour unto them
That else are lost in blind and whelming seas.
Around them is the tempest; over them,
Cold splendours of the inhospitable night,
Augustly unregardful: thou alone
Art still the North Star to the labouring ship,
In friendless ocean the befriending orb,
And if thou shine not, whither is she steered?
Shine in thy glory, shine on her despair,
Shine lest she perish—lest of her no more
Than some lorn flotsam of mortality
Remain to catch the first auroral gleam,
When, in the East, flames the reluctant dawn.

AFTER DEFEAT *

PRAY, what chorus this? At the tragedy's end, what chorus?
Surely bewails it the brave, the unhappily starred, the abandoned
Sole unto fate, by yonder invincible kin of the vanquished?
Surely salutes it the fallen, not mocks the protagonist prostrate?

Hark! 'Make merry. Ye dreamed that a monster sickened: behold him
Rise, new-fanged. Make merry. A hero troubled and shamed you.
Jousting in desperate lists, he is trodden of giants in armour.
Mighty is Night. Make merry. The Dawn for a season is frustrate.

* Written at the close of the Græco-Turkish War.

AFTER DEFEAT

Thus, after all these ages, a pæan, a loud jubilation,
Mounts, from peoples bemused, to a heaven refraining its thunder.

ON BEING STYLED 'PRO-BOER'

FRIEND, call me what you will : no jot care I :
I that shall stand for England till I die.
England ! The England that rejoiced to see
Hellas unbound, Italy one and free ;
The England that had tears for Poland's doom,
And in her heart for all the world made room ;
The England from whose side I have not swerved ;
The immortal England whom I, too, have served,
Accounting her all living lands above,
In Justice, and in Mercy, and in Love.

LINES TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE JAMES BRYCE, M.P., IN ANSWER TO A LETTER

THANKS for your heartening word, that came from one
Acquainted with the story of many peoples,
Acquainted with the life of many peoples;
An honoured labourer for the amity
And weal of peoples, loftier things than sway.

Thanks for your heartening word, that came to one
Fated to hoist a somewhat lonely sail,
Against the wind and tide; that came to one
Fated to be at variance with the time,
Touching the parts it hisses or applauds;
Who liefer would sit mute, and be withdrawn
Far into some consolatory Past,
Among old voices, the unperishing,
Save that such words of cheer the courier Hours
Bring when most needed, words restorative,

Coming across the silence or dispraise,
Coming across the welter and the gloom.

I lose not hope or faith in this great land,
This many-victoried, many-heroed land,
Though hope oft sinks, and faith is hard to hold.
She that with ruthless John and truthless Charles,
And James the despicable, by voice or sword
Strove, and not vainly, for her liberties ;
She that from him, the humbler of the world,
Whose thunderous heel was on submitted thrones,
Kept whole and virginal her liberties ;
She that so joyed at sound of other lands
Heaved high with passion for their liberties ;
Shall yet recall—'tis thus at least I dream,
Being her lover, and dreaming from the heart—
Shall yet recall her desert-wandering soul ;
Shall yet remember—she forgets to-day—
How the munificent hands of Life are full
Of gifts more covetable an hundredfold
Than man's dominion o'er reluctant man ;
And come upon old wealth disused and idle,
Her scorned estate and slighted patrimony,
Auriferous veins in all the field of being,
With those shy treasures no self-seeking wins,
Rather self-search, and grace of fortunate hours.

LINES TO THE HON. J. BRYCE, M.P.

The Cæsars and the Alexanders pass,
While he that drank the hemlock, He that drank
The Cup more dread on Calvary hill, remain,
Servants and mighty conquerors of the world.
The great achievement of the human mind
Is the idea of Justice. More than arts
And sciences, than faiths and rituals, this
Lifts all our life above the life of beasts.
Chiefly by this are we a nobler kind,
The Earth's select and separate; lost to this,
Our state is as the state of beasts indeed,
That snatch their meat, one from another's mouth,
And without pain another's pain behold;
Though these are guiltless, knowing not light or law.

ROME AND ANOTHER

SHE asked for all things, and dominion such
As never man had known,
The gods first gave ; then lightly, touch by touch,
O'erthrew her seven-hilled throne.

Imperial Power, that hungerest for the globe,
Restrain thy conquering feet,
Lest the same Fates that spun thy purple robe
Should weave thy winding-sheet.

AN IDEAL PASSION

Not she, the England I behold,
My mistress is; nor yet
The England beautiful of old,
Whom Englishmen forget.

The England of my heart is she,
Long hoped and long deferred,
That ever promises to be,
And ever breaks her word.

THE TRUE IMPERIALISM

HERE, while the tide of conquest rolls
  Against the distant golden shore,
The starved and stunted human souls
  Are with us more and more.

Vain is your Science, vain your Art,
  Your triumphs and your glories vain,
To feed the hunger of their heart
  And famine of their brain.

Your savage deserts howling near,
  Your wastes of ignorance, vice, and shame,—
Is there no room for victories here,
  No field for deeds of fame?

Arise and conquer while ye can
  The foe that in your midst resides,
And build within the mind of Man
  The Empire that abides.

THE DRAGONS

Prince Vortigern—so run the ancient tales—
A stronghold sought to build in wildest Wales;
But some fell Power frustrated each assay,
And nightly wrecked the labours of the day;
Till Merlin came, and bade the builders all,
Beneath the escarp'd and many-bastioned wall,
Dig deep; and lo, two dragons, o'er whose lair
Nothing secure might rise, lay sleeping there.

Search the foundations, you that build a State;
For if the dragon forms of Wrath and Hate
Lie coiled below, and darkly bide their hour,
Fear walks the rampart, Fear ascends the tower.
And let it not content you that they sleep:
Drive them with strong enchantments to the deep.
First of such charms is Perfect Justice; then
Comes the heart's word that conquers beasts and men.
No other craft shall serve—no spells but these
Drive the old dragons to the whelming seas.

ALPHA AND OMEGA

He throned her in the gateways of the world,
He 'stablished her on high before the peoples.

He raised her as a watch-tower from the wave,
He built her as a lighthouse on the waters.

He maketh and unmaketh without end,
And He alone, who is First and Last, shall judge her.

ODE ON
THE DAY OF THE CORONATION OF KING EDWARD VII

I

SIRE, we have looked on many and mighty things
In these eight hundred summers of renown
Since the Gold Dragon of the Wessex Kings
On Hastings field went down ;
And slowly in the ambience of this crown
Have many crowns been gathered, till, to-day,
How many peoples crown thee, who shall say ?
Time, and the ocean, and some fostering star,
In high cabal have made us what we are,
Who stretch one hand to Huron's bearded pines,
And one on Kashmir's snowy shoulder lay,
And round the streaming of whose raiment shines
The iris of the Australasian spray.
For waters have connived at our designs,
And winds have plotted with us—and behold,

Kingdom in kingdom, sway in oversway,
Dominion fold in fold:
Like to that immemorial regal stone
Thy namesake from the northland reft away,
Symbol of sovereignty and spoil of fray,
And closed in England's throne.
So wide of girth this little cirque of gold,
So great we are, and old.
Proud from the ages are we come, O King;
Proudly, as fits a nation that hath now
So many dawns and sunsets on her brow,
This duteous heart we bring.

II

The kings thy far forerunners; he that came
And smote us into greatness; he whose fame,
In dark armipotence and ivied pride,
Towers above Conway's tide,
And where Carnarvon ponders on the sea;
He, that adventurous name,
Who left at Agincourt the knightly head
Of France and all its charging plumes o'erthrown,
But hath in Shakespeare's conquests merged his own;
And she, a queen, yet fashioned king-like, she

Before whose prows, before whose tempests, fled
Spain on the ruining night precipitately;
And that worn face, in camps and councils bred,
The guest who brought us law and liberty
Raised well-nigh from the dead;
Yea, she herself, in whose immediate stead
Thou standest, in the shadow of her soul;
All these, O King, from their seclusion dread,
And guarded palace of eternity,
Mix in thy pageant with phantasmal tread,
Hear the long waves of acclamation roll,
And with yet mightier silence marshal thee
To the awful throne thou hast inherited.

III

Lo, at the Earth's high feast, ere Autumn bring
His afterthoughts on greatness to her ear;
And with monitions of mortality
Perturb the revelling year,
Thou goest forth and art anointed King.
Nature disdains not braveries: why should we
The sombre foil to all her splendours be?
Let London rustle with rich apparelling,
And all the ways, with festal faces lined,

Casement and coign and fluttering balcony,
Wave welcome on the wind.
Now the loud land flames with imperial gear,
And life itself, so late in hues austere
And the cold reign of iron custom bound,
Puts off its gray subjection, and is here
One moment throned and crowned.
Now the long glories prance and triumph by:
And now the pomps have passed, and we depart
Each to the peace or strife of his own heart:
And now the day whose bosom was so high
Sinks billowing down: and twilight sorceries change
Into remote and strange
What is most known and nigh:
And changelessly the river sends his sigh
Down leagues of hope and fear, and pride and shame,
And life and death; dim-journeying passionless
To where broad estuary and beaconing ness
Look toward the outlands whence our fathers came.
And high on Druid mountains hath the sun
Flamed valediction, as the last lights died
Beyond that fatal wave, that from our side
Sunders the lovely and the lonely Bride
Whom we have wedded but have never won.

IV

And night falls on an isle whose vassal seas
Remember not her prone regalities,
So withered from belief, so far and faint,
In such abjection before Time they lie,
Kingdoms and thrones forgotten of the sky.
Deira with her sea-face to the morn,
And Cumbria sunset-gazing; moist Dyvnaint,
A realm of coombs and tors; old greatnesses
From Dee to Severn, where the bards were born
Whose songs are in the wind by Idris' chair,
Whose lips won battles; and seats of puissance
where,
With long grope of his desultory hand,
The ocean, prying deep into the land,
By Morven and the legends of wild Lorn,
Repents him, lost about Locheil; all these
Have been, and 'stablisht on their dust we stand;
Thy England; with the northern sister fair,
That hath the heath-bells in her blowing hair
And the dark mountain maid
That dreams for ever in the wizard shade,
Hymning her heroes there.

V

O doom of overlordships! to decay
First at the heart, the eye scarce dimmed at all;
Or perish of much cumber and array,
The burdening robe of empire, and its pall;
Or, of voluptuous hours the wanton prey,
Die of the poisons that most sweetly slay;
Or, from insensate height,
With prodigies, with light
Of trailing angers on the monstrous night,
Magnificently fall.
Far off from her that bore us be such fate,
And vain against her gate
Its knocking. But by chinks and crannies, Death,
Forbid the doorways, oft-times entereth.
Let her drink deep of discontent, and sow
Abroad the troubling knowledge. Let her show
Whence glories come, and wherefore glories go,
And what indeed are glories, unto these
'Twixt labour and the rest that is not ease
Made blank and darksome; who have hardly heard
Sound of her loftiest names, or any word
Of all that hath in gold been said and sung,
Since him of April heart and morning tongue,
Her ageless singing-bird.

ODE ON CORONATION OF EDWARD VII.

For now the day is unto them that know,
And not henceforth she stumbles on the prize;
And yonder march the nations full of eyes.
Already is doom a-spinning, if unstirred
In leisure of ancient pathways she lose touch
Of the hour, and overmuch
Recline upon achievement, and be slow
To take the world arriving, and forget
How perilous are the stature and port that so
Invite the arrows, how unslumbering all
The hates that watch and crawl.
Nor must she, like the others, yield up yet
The generous dreams! but rather live to be
Saluted in the hearts of men as she
Of high and singular election, set
Benignant on the mitigated sea;
That greatly loving freedom loved to free,
And was herself the bridal and embrace
Of strength and conquering grace.

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EPIGRAMS

TO ———

FORGET not, brother singer! that though Prose
Can never be too truthful or too wise,
Song is not Truth, not Wisdom, but the rose
Upon Truth's lips, the light in Wisdom's eyes.

SHELLEY AND HARRIET

A STAR look'd down from heaven and loved a flower
Grown in earth's garden—loved it for an hour.
Let eyes that trace his orbit in the spheres
Refuse not, to a ruin'd rosebud, tears.

EPIGRAMS

AFTER READING 'TAMBURLAINE THE GREAT'

Your Marlowe's page I close, my Shakespeare's ope.
How welcome—after gong and cymbal's din—
The continuity, the long slow slope
And vast curves of the gradual violin !

KEATS

He dwelt with the bright gods of elder time,
On earth and in their cloudy haunts above.
He loved them : and in recompense sublime,
The gods, alas ! gave him their fatal love.

EPIGRAMS

BYRON THE VOLUPTUARY

Too avid of earth's bliss, he was of those
Whom Delight flies because they give her chase.
Only the odour of her wild hair blows
Back in their faces hungering for her face.

TO CHRISTINA ROSSETTI

Songstress, in all times ended and begun,
Thy billowy-bosom'd fellows are not three.
Of those sweet peers, the grass is green o'er one;
And blue above the other is the sea.

EPIGRAMS

ANTONY AT ACTIUM

He holds a dubious balance : yet *that* scale,
Whose freight the world is, surely shall prevail ?
No ; Cleopatra droppeth into *this*
One counterpoising kiss.

TO A LADY RECOVERED FROM A DANGEROUS SICKNESS

Life plucks thee back as by the golden hair—
Life, who had feigned to let thee go but now.
Wealthy is Death already, and can spare
Ev'n such a prey as thou.

THE GUESTS OF HEAVEN

Science and Art, compeers in glory,
Boast each a haunt divine.
'My place is in God's laboratory.'
'And in His garden mine.'

THE CATHEDRAL SPIRE

It soars like hearts of hapless men who dare
To sue for gifts the gods refuse to allot;
Who climb for ever toward they know not where,
Baffled for ever by they know not what.

EPIGRAMS

THE RUINED ABBEY

FLOWER-FONDLED, clasp'd in ivy's close caress,
It seems allied with Nature, yet apart :—
Of wood's and wave's insensate loveliness
The glad, sad, tranquil, passionate human heart.

DURER'S 'MELENCOLIA'

WHAT holds her fix'd far eyes nor lets them range?
Not the strange sea, strange earth, or heaven more strange;
But her own phantom dwarfing these great three,
More strange than all, more old than heaven, earth, sea.

EPIGRAMS

TO A POET

TIME, the extortioner, from richest beauty
Takes heavy toll and wrings rapacious duty.
Austere of feature if thou carve thy rhyme,
Perchance 'twill pay the lesser tax to Time.

THE YEAR'S MINSTRELSY

SPRING, the low prelude of a lordlier song :
Summer, a music without hint of death :
Autumn, a cadence lingeringly long :
Winter, a pause ;—the Minstrel-Year takes breath.

EPIGRAMS

INSCRIPTION ON A ROCK HAVING THE LIKENESS OF COLOSSAL HUMAN FEATURES

The seafowls build in wrinkles of my face.
Ages ere man was, man was mock'd of me.
Kings fall, gods die, worlds crash ;—at my throne's base
In showers of bright white thunder breaks the sea.

FROM THE FRENCH

Says Marmontel, The secret's mine
Of Racine's art-of-verse divine.
To do thee justice, Marmontel,
Never was secret kept so well.

EPIGRAMS

FROM THE SPANISH

THE Stage is all men's mirror clear.
They who condemn it, judgment pass
Upon themselves. Who fly it, fear
To meet their image in the glass.

ROCHEFOUCAULD CONSISTENT

SAGE Duke, thy creed who runs may read—
Men feign in every word and deed.
Therewith thy practice well agreed,
For sure am I thou feign'dst thy creed.

EPIGRAMS

THE HISTORY OF MUSIC

THROUGH Formalism her progress lay.
Arrived at Form, there let her stay!
For if she still must onward press,
'Tis but few steps to Formlessness.

TWO POETS

A PEACOCK'S-TAIL-LIKE splendour hath this Muse,
With eyes that see not throng'd, and gorgeous hues.
The swan's white grace that other wears instead,
Stately with stem-like throat and flower-like head.

AN EPITAPH

His friends he loved. His direst earthly foes—
Cats—I believe he did but feign to hate.
My hand will miss the insinuated nose,
Mine eyes the tail that wagg'd contempt at Fate.

THE TOWN, BY GASLIGHT

Here age loathes age, and youth doth youth decoy
With pleasure's joyless travesty of joy;
And Sin and Death with link'd arms walk the street;
And night's mad heart doth beat, and beat, and beat.

THE METROPOLITAN UNDERGROUND RAILWAY

HERE were a goodly place wherein to die ;—
Grown latterly to sudden change averse,
All violent contrasts fain avoid would I
On passing from this world into a worse.

A MAIDEN'S EPITAPH

SHE dwelt among us till the flowers, 'tis said,
Grew jealous of her : with precipitate feet,
As loth to wrong them unawares, she fled.
Earth is less fragrant now, and heaven more sweet.

ON READING HOW THE WIDOW OF WAGNER CUT OFF HER HAIR, AND PLACED IT IN HER HUSBAND'S COFFIN WITH HIS CORPSE

HER head's bright harvest laid she in the mould,
Flooding death's emptiness with billowy gold.
He sleeps; and in his earthy dreams, can see
Her lustrous love illume eternity.

ART

THE thousand painful steps at last are trod,
At last the temple's difficult door we win;
But perfect on his pedestal, the god
Freezes us hopeless when we enter in.

EPIGRAMS

ON LONGFELLOW'S DEATH

No mighty singer he, whose silence grieves
To-day the great West's tender heart and strong:
No singer vast of voice: yet one who leaves
His native air the sweeter for his song.

TO MR. GLADSTONE

(1882)

Sculptor of nobler stuff than marble thou,
Shaping the Morrow from the plastic Now.
Fain wouldst thou carve it fair;—alas! what use?
A churl's raised foot can mar a Pheidian Zeus.

'SUBJECTIVITY' IN ART

If, in the Work, must needs stand manifest
The Person, be his features, therein shown,
Like a man's thought in a god's words express'd—
His own and somehow greater than his own.

EPIGRAMS

I

THOU dost but flit, my merle! from tree to tree,
While ön the heights of morn the lark is loud.
Thou hast no wish thy native world to flee,
Knowing the star is far, and dense the cloud.

II

THE statue—Buonarotti said—doth wait,
Thrall'd in the block, for me to emancipate.
The poem—saith the poet—wanders free
Till I betray it to captivity.

III

NETTLE and dockleaf ancient neighbours be,
And herb-of-healing jostles bane-berry.
Grows by the bank which Marah's waters lave
The tree that maketh sweet the bitter wave.

EPIGRAMS

IV

To keep in sight Perfection, and adore
  Her beauty, is the artist's best delight;
His bitterest torture, that he can no more
  Than keep her long'd-for loveliness in sight.

V

The children romp within the graveyard's pale;
The lark sings o'er a madhouse, or a gaol;—
Such nice antitheses of perfect poise
Chance in her curious rhetoric employs.

VI

Who never knew a sorrow grow his friend
And half regretted from his threshold wend?
Who never long'd his tear-scorcht eyes to lave
Rather with any than with Lethe's wave?

VII

'How weak are words—to carry thoughts like mine!'
Saith each dull dangler round the much-bored Nine.
Yet words sufficed for Shakspere's suit when he
Woo'd Time, and won instead Eternity.

VIII

For metaphors of man we search the skies,
And find our allegory in all the air.
We gaze on Nature with Narcissus' eyes,
Enamour'd of our shadow everywhere.

IX

Toiling and yearning, 'tis man's doom to see
No perfect creature fashion'd of his hands.
Insulted by a flower's immaculacy,
And mock'd at by the flawless stars he stands.

X

Brook, from whose bridge the wandering idler peers
To watch thy small fish dart or cool floor shine,
I would that bridge whose arches all are years
Spann'd not a less transparent wave than thine!

XI

One music maketh its occult abode
In all things scatter'd from great Beauty's hand;
And evermore the deepest words of God
Are yet the easiest to understand.

XII

I pluck'd this flower, O brighter flower, for thee,
There where the river dies into the sea.
To kiss it the wild west wind hath made free:
Kiss it thyself and give it back to me.

EPIGRAMS

XIII

His rhymes the poet flings at all men's feet,
And whoso will may trample on his rhymes.
Should Time let die a song that's true and sweet,
The singer's loss were more than match'd by Time's.

XIV

In youth the artist voweth lover's vows
To Art, in manhood maketh her his spouse.
Well if her charms yet hold for him such joy
As when he craved some boon and she was coy!

XV

If Nature be a phantasm, as thou say'st,
A splendid figment and prodigious dream,
To reach the real and true I'll make no haste,
More than content with worlds that only seem.

EPIGRAMS

XVI

In mid whirl of the dance of Time ye start,
Start at the cold touch of Eternity,
And cast your cloaks about you, and depart.—
The minstrels pause not in their minstrelsy.

XVII

Love, like a bird, hath perch'd upon a spray
For thee and me to hearken what he sings.
Contented, he forgets to fly away;
But hush! . . . remind not Eros of his wings.

XVIII

Onward the chariot of the Untarrying moves;
Nor day divulges him nor night conceals;
Thou hear'st the echo of unreturning hooves
And thunder of irrevocable wheels.

XIX

Ah, vain, thrice vain in the end, thy hate and rage
And the shrill tempest of thy clamorous page.
True poets but transcendent lovers be,
And one great love-confession poesy.

XX

Think not thy wisdom can illume away
The ancient tanglement of night and day.
Enough, to acknowledge both, and both revere:
They see not clearliest who see all things clear.

XXI

'Tis human fortune's happiest height, to be
A spirit melodious, lucid, poised, and whole;
Second in order of felicity,
To walk with such a soul.

XXII

IMMURED in sense, with fivefold bonds confined,
Rest we content if whispers from the stars
In waftings of the incalculable wind
Come blown at midnight through our prison-bars.

XXIII

MOMENTOUS to himself as I to me
Hath each man been that ever woman bore;
Once, in a lightning-flash of sympathy,
I *felt* this truth, an instant, and no more.

XXIV

THE beasts in field are glad, and have not wit
To know why leapt their hearts when spring-time shone.
Man looks at his own bliss, considers it,
Weighs it with curious fingers; and 'tis gone.

EARLY POEMS

THE PRINCE'S QUEST

PART THE FIRST

THERE was a time, it passeth me to say
How long ago, but sure 'twas many a day
Before the world had gotten her such store
Of foolish wisdom as she hath,—before
She fell to waxing gray with weight of years
And knowledge, bitter knowledge, bought with tears,—
When it did seem as if the feet of time
Moved to the music of a golden rhyme,
And never one false thread might woven be
Athwart that web of worldwide melody.
'Twas then there lived a certain queen and king,
Unvext of wars or other evil thing,
Within a spacious palace builded high,
Whence they might see their chiefest city lie
About them, and half hear from their tall towers
Its populous murmur through the daylight hours,

And see beyond its walls the pleasant plain.
One child they had, these blissful royal twain;
Of whom 'tis told—so more than fair was he—
There lurked at whiles a something shadowy
Deep down within the fairness of his face;
As 'twere a hint of some not-earthly grace,
That made this mortal stripling rather seem
The very dreaming offspring of a dream
Than human child of human ancestry:
So hid in moods fantastical was he
Full often! Howsoever, he upgrew,
And after certain years to manhood drew
Nigh, and the great ones at his father's court,
Seeing his graciousness of princely port,
Rejoiced thereat; and many maidens' eyes
Look'd on his face and gladdened, and the sighs
Of many told I know not what sweet tales.

So, like to some fair ship with sunlit sails,
Glided his youth amid a stormless sea,
Till once by night there came mysteriously
A wind of fate, and o'er an unknown deep
Bore him perforce. It chanced that while in sleep
He lay, there came to him a strange dim dream.
'Twas like as he did float adown a stream,
In a lone boat that had nor sail nor oar

Yet seemed as it would glide for evermore,
Deep in the bosom of a sultry land
Fair with all fairness. Upon either hand
Were hills green-browed and mist-engarlanded,
And all about their feet the forest spread,
Hoarding the cool and dusky silentness
In many an unsunned hollow and hid recess.
Nought of unlovely might be there espied ;
But in the heart of the deep woods and wide,
And in the heart of all things, Mystery dwelled :
A something more than outward eye beheld,
A something only inward ear might hear.
The very birds that preened their plumes anear,
And babbled leafy loves, did seem to hold
Some wizard secret on their tongues untold.
And o'er the mountains came the hollow tone
Of far-off horns by airy hunters blown,
By airy hunters hunting shadowy deer
In forests of illusion all the year.

So hour by hour (thus ran the Prince's dream)
Glided the boat along the broadening stream ;
Till, being widowed of the sun her lord,
The purblind day wept groping evenward :
Whereafter sleep compelled to his mild yoke
The bubbling clear souls of the feathered folk;

Sealing the amorous fountains of their song.
Howbeit the Prince went onward all night long
And never shade of languor came on him,
Nor any weariness his eyes made dim.
And so in season due he heard the breath
Of the brief winds that wake ere darkness' death
Sigh through the woods and all the valley wide:
The rushes by the water answering sighed:
Sighed all the river from its reedy throat.
And like a winged creature went the boat,
Over the errant water wandering free,
As some lone seabird over a lone sea.

And Morn pale-haired with watery wide eyes
Look'd up. And starting with a swift surprise,
Sprang to his feet the Prince, and forward leant,
His gaze on something right before him bent
That like a towered and templed city showed,
Afar off, dim with very light, and glowed
As burnished seas at sundawn when the waves
Make amber lightnings all in dim-roof'd caves
That fling mock-thunder back. Long leagues away
Down by the river's green right bank it lay,
Set like a jewel in the golden morn:
But ever as the Prince was onward borne,
Nearer and nearer danced the dizzy fires

Of domes innumerable and sun-tipt spires
And many a sky-acquainted pinnacle,
Splendid beyond what mortal tongue may tell ;
And ere the middle heat of day was spent,
He saw, by nearness thrice-magnificent,
Hardly a furlong's space before him lie
The City, sloping to the stream thereby.

And therewithal the boat of its own will
Close to the shore began to glide, until,
All of a sudden passing nigh to where
The glistering white feet of a marble stair
Ran to the rippled brink, the Prince outsprang
Upon the gleamy steps, and wellnigh sang
For joy, to be once more upon his feet,
Amid the green grass and the flowers sweet.
So on he paced along the river-marge,
And saw full many a fair and stately barge
At anchor in the quiet waters lie,
Or shake her purfled streamers to the sky.
And gazing upon these he came anon
Unto a gate of sculptured gold that shone
Embossed with gods and heroes 'neath a frieze
All overwrought with carven phantasies.
And in the shadow of the golden gate,
One in the habit of a porter sate,

Who looked upon the Prince with wondering air,
And greeting lowly thus bespake him fair :
'Sir, I perceive thou art of mortal race,
The first that ever journeyed to this place !
And if thy raiment do belie thee not,
Thou shouldst be some king's son. And well I wot,
If that be true was prophesied of yore,
A wondrous fortune is for thee in store ;
For surely 'tis foretold in Doomful Writ
(Oft have I heard the wise expounding it)
That the first mortal who shall hither fare
Shall have to wife our Maiden-Queen, and share—
So blest above all sons of men is he—
Her sceptre and her immortality.'

With that the Prince, and his right willing guide,
Went straightway through the gate, and stood inside
The wall, that, builded of a wan white stone,
Begirt the city like a silver zone.
And thence down many a spacious way they passed,
Each one appearing goodlier than the last,
Cool with the presence of benignant trees
And fountains playing before palaces.
And whichsoever way the Prince might look,
Another marvel, and another, took
His wildered eyes with very wonderment.

And holding talk together as they went,
The Prince besought his guide to tell him why
Of all the many folk that passed them by
There was not one that had the look of eld,
Or yet of life's mid-years ; for they beheld
Only young men and damsels everywhere,
Nor ever saw they one that was not fair.
Whereat the stripling : 'Master, thou hast seen,
Belike, the river that doth flow between
Flowers and grasses at the city's feet?'
And when the Prince had rendered answer meet,
'Then,' said the other, 'know that whosoe'er
Drinks of the lapping wave that brimmeth there
(It matters not how many are his years)
Thenceforward from that moment he appears
Like as he was in noon of youth, before
His mounting summers overtopped a score :
And so the people of this land possess,
Age after age, unaltering agelessness.'

Scarce had he told this marvel when there rose
Somewhat of tumult, ruffling the repose
Of the wide splendid street ; and lifting up
His eyes, the Prince beheld a glittering troop
Of horsemen, each upon a proud-neck'd steed,
Toward them coming at a gentle speed.

And as the cavalcade drew on apace,
A new joy blossomed in the cloudless face
Of his companion duteous at his sid .
'Thou shalt behold our Queen,' the stripling cried,—
'Even the fairest of ten thousand fair;
With whom was never maiden might compare
For very perfectness!' While yet he spake,
On all the air a silver sound 'gan break
Of jubilant and many-tongued acclaim,
And golden-charioted the bright queen came;
And looking forth upon the multitude
Her eyes beheld the stranger where he stood;
And round about him was the loyal stir:
And all his soul went forth in love to her.

But even while he gazed on her, behold,
That city fleeted into twilight cold;
And sundering waters lay like time between
Him and its marvels; and he saw the Queen
Fading afar upon a fading shore;
And woke to be her bondsman evermore.

THE PRINCE'S QUEST

PART THE SECOND

A FEARFUL and a lovely thing is Sleep,
And mighty store of secrets hath in keep ;
And those there were of old who well could guess
What meant his fearfulness and loveliness,
And all his many shapes of life and death,
And all the secret things he uttereth.
But Wisdom lacketh sons like those that were,
And Sleep hath never an interpreter :
So there be none that know to read aright
The riddles he propoundeth every night.

And verily, of all the wondrous things
By potence wrought of mortal visionings
In that dark house whereof Sleep hath the keys—
Of suchlike miracles and mysteries
Not least, meseems, is this among them all :
That one in dream enamourèd should fall,
And ever afterward, in waking thought,
Worship the phantom which the dream hath brought.
Howbeit such things have been, and in such wise
Did that king's son behold, with mortal eyes,

A more than mortal loveliness, and thus
Was stricken through with love miraculous.

For evermore thereafter he did seem
To see that royal maiden of his dream
Unto her palace riding sovranly ;
And much he marvelled where that land might be
That basking lay beneath her beauty's beams,
Well knowing in his heart that suchlike dreams
Come not in idleness, but evermore
Are Fate's veiled heralds that do fly before
Their mighty master as he journeyeth,
And sing strange songs of life and love and death.
Wherefore he did scarce ought but dream all day
Of that far land revealed of sleep, that lay
He knew not where ; and musing more and more
On her the mistress of that unknown shore,
There fell a sadness on him, thus to be
Vext with desire of her he might not see
Yet could not choose but long for ; till erewhile
Nor man nor woman might behold the smile
Make sudden morning of his countenance,
But likest one he seemed half-sunk in trance,
That wanders groping in a shadowy land,
Hearing strange things that none can understand.

Now after many days and nights had passed,
The queen, his mother well-beloved, at last,
Being sad at heart because his heart was sad,
Would e'en be told what hidden cause he had
To be cast down in so mysterious wise:
And he, beholding by her tearful eyes
How of his grief she was compassionate,
No more a secret made thereof, but straight
Discovered to her all his wondrous dream—
The mystic happy marvel of the stream,
A fountain running Youth to all the land;
Flowing with deep dim woods on either hand
Where through the boughs did birds of strange
song flit:
And all beside the bloomy banks of it
The city with its towers and domes far-seen.
And then he told her how that city's queen
Did pass before him like a breathing flower,
That he had loved her image from that hour.
'And sure am I,' upspake the Prince at last,
'That somewhere in this world so wide and vast
Lieth the land mine eyes have inly seen;—
Perhaps in very truth my spirit hath been
Translated thither, and in very truth
Hath seen the brightness of that city of youth.
Who knows?—for I have heard a wise man say

How that in sleep the souls of mortals may,
At certain seasons which the stars decree,
From bondage of the body be set free
To visit farthest countries, and be borne
Back to their fleshly houses ere the morn.

At this the good queen, greatly marvelling,
Made haste to tell the story to the king;
Who hearing laughed her tale to scorn. But when
Weeks followed one another, and all men
About his person had begun to say
'What ails our Prince? He groweth day by day
Less like the Prince we knew . . . wan cheeks, and eyes
Hollow for lack of sleep, and secret sighs . . .
Some hidden grief the youth must surely have,'—
Then like his queen the king himself grew grave;
And thus it chanced one summer eventide,
They sitting in an arbour side by side,
All unawares the Prince passed by that way,
And as he passed, unmark'd of either—they
Nought heeding but their own discourse—could hear
Amidst thereof his own name uttered clear,
And straight was 'ware it was the queen who spake,
And spake of him; whereat the king 'gan make

Answer in this wise, somewhat angerly :
'The youth is crazed, and but one remedy
Know I, to cure such madness—he shall wed
Some princess ; ere another day be sped,
Myself will bid this dreamer go prepare
To take whom I shall choose for wife ; some fair
And highborn maiden, worthy to be queen
Hereafter.'—So the Prince, albeit unseen,
Heard, and his soul rebelled against the thing
His sire had willed ; and slowly wandering
About the darkling pleasance—all amid
A maze of intertangled walks, or hid
In cedarn glooms, or where mysterious bowers
Were heavy with the breath of drowsèd flowers—
Something, he knew not what, within his heart
Rose like a faint-heard voice and said 'Depart
From hence and follow where thy dream shall lead.
And fain would he have followed it indeed,
But wist not whither it would have him go.

Howbeit, while yet he wandered to and fro,
Among his thoughts a chance remembrance leapt
All sudden—like a seed, that long hath slept
In earth, upspringing as a flower at last,
When he that sowed forgetteth where 'twas cast ;
A chance remembrance of the tales men told

Concerning one whose wisdom manifold
Made all the world to wonder and revere—
A mighty mage and learn'd astrologer
Who dwelt in honour at a great king's court
In a far country, whither did resort
Pilgrims innumerable from many lands,
Who crossed the wide seas and the desert sands
To learn of him the occult significance
Of some perplexing omen, or perchance
To hear forewhisperings of their destiny
And know what things in aftertime should be.
'Now surely,' thought the Prince, 'this subtle seer,
To whom the darkest things belike are clear,
Could read the riddle of my dream and tell
Where lieth that strange land delectable
Wherein mine empress hath her dwelling-place.
So might I look at last upon her face,
And make an end of all these weary sighs,
And melt into the shadow of her eyes!'
Thus musing, for a little space he stood
As holden to the spot; and evil, good,
Life, death, and earth beneath and heaven above,
Withered to less than shadows,—only Love,
With harpings of an hundred harps unseen,
Filled all the emptiness where these had been.

But soon, like one that hath a sudden thought,
He lifted up his eyes, and turning sought
The halls once more where he was bred, and passed
Through court and corridor, and reached at last
His chamber, in a world of sheen and shade,
Where the full moon on gorgeous arras played.
Here he put off in haste his courtly dress
For raiment of a lesser sumptuousness
(A sober habit such as might disguise
His royal rank in any stranger's eyes)
And taking in his hand three gems that made
Three several splendours in the moonlight, laid
These in his bosom ; then all noiselessly,
And watch'd but of the peopled tapestry,
Down the wide stair from creaking floor to floor
Passed, and went forth from the great palace door,
And crossed the silent city, and sped alone,
Onward and onward, into the Unknown.

PART THE THIRD

So without rest or tarriance all that night,
Until the world was blear with coming light,
Forth fared the princely fugitive, nor stayed
His wearied feet till morn returning made

Some village all a-hum with wakeful stir ;
And from that place the royal wayfarer
Went ever faster on and yet more fast,
Till, ere the noontide sultriness was past,
Upon his ear the burden of the seas
Came dreamlike, heard upon a cool fresh breeze
That tempered gratefully a fervent sky.
And many an hour ere sundown he drew nigh
A fair-built seaport, warder of the land
And watcher of the wave, with odours fanned
Of green fields and of blue from either side ;—
A pleasant place, wherein he might abide,
Unknown of man or woman, till such time
As any ship should sail to that far clime
Where lived the famous great astrologer.

Entered within its gates, a wanderer
Besoiled with dust and nowise richly drest,
Yet therewithal a prince and princeliest
Of princes, with the press of motley folk
He mixed unheeded and unknown, nor spoke
To any, no man speaking unto him,
But, being wearied sore in every limb,
Sought out a goodly hostel where he might
Rest him and eat and tarry for the night :
And having eaten he arose and passed

Down to the wharves where many a sail and mast
Showed fiery-dark against the setting sun :
There, holding talk with whom he chanced upon,
In that same hour by great good hap he found
The master of a vessel outward-bound
Upon the morrow for that selfsame port
Whither he sought to go (where dwelt at court
The mage deep learn'd in every starry sign).
An honest man, all breezy from the brine,
Was this good master-mariner ; and since
He had no scorn of well-got gain, the Prince
Agreed to pay him certain sums in gold,
And go aboard his vessel, ere were told
Two hours of sunlight on the coming day ;
And thus agreed they wended each his way,
For the dusk hour was nigh, and all the West
Lay emptied of its sun. But as he pressed
Up the long seaward-sloping street that ran
Through half the town, the Prince sought out a man
Who dealt in pearls and diamonds and all
Manner of stones which men do precious call ;
To whom the least of his three gems he sold
For a great price, and laden with the gold
Forthwith returned unto his hostelry
And dreamed all night of seaports and the sea.

Early the morrow-morn, a fair soft gale
Blowing from overland, the ship set sail
At turning of the tide ; and from her deck
The Prince gazed till the town became a speck,
And all the shore was but a memory :
And still he gazed, though more he might not see
Than the wide waters and the great wide sky.
And many a long unchangeful day went by
Ere land was sighted, but at length uprose
A doubtful dusky something, toward the close
Of the last hour before a sultry noon :
Most like an isle of cloud it seemed, but soon
The sailors knew it for the wished strand,
And ere the evenfall they reached the land,
And that same night the royal wanderer lay
In a strange city, amid strange folk, till Day
Rose from the dim sea's lap and with his wings
Fanned into wakefulness all breathing things.

Then he uprose, but going forth that morn
A sadness came upon him, and forlorn
He felt within himself, and nowise light
Of heart : for all his lonely travel might
Prove void and fruitless and of no avail
(Thus pondered he), and should it wholly fail,
What then were left for him to do ? Return

To his own country, that his kin might learn
To know him duped and fooled of fantasies,
Blown hither and thither by an idle breeze
From Dreamland? Or in lieu, perchance, of this,
Wander unresting, reft of hope and bliss,
A mariner on a sea that hath no coast,
Seeking a shade, himself a shade, and lost
In shadows, as a wave is lost i' the sea.

Thus in a heart not lightsome pondered he,
And roamed from unfamiliar street to street,
Much marvelling that all he chanced to meet
Showed faces troubled as his own: for some
Did weep outright, and over all a gloom
Hung, as a cloud that blotteth out the sun.
Wherefore the Prince addressed him unto one
Of sadder visage even than the rest,
Who, ever as he walked, or beat his breast
Or groaned aloud, or with his fingers rent
His robe, and, being besought to say what meant
This look of rue on all men's faces, cried
In loud amazement, 'What, can any abide
Within this city, having ears to hear,
Yet know not how this morn the mighty seer
Hath died and left the land all desolate?
For now, when sudden ills befall the state,

There will be none to warn or prophesy
As he, but when calamities are nigh
No man will know till they be come and we
Be all undone together, woe is me ! '

Thus ended he his outcry, and again
Passed on his way and mixed with other men
Scarce joyfuller than he, if less they spake.
Meanwhile upon the Prince's heart there brake
Grief like a bitter wind, beneath whose breath
Hope paled and sickened well-nigh unto death :
For lo, those dumb and formless fears that came
Within his heart that morn, and, like a flame
That flickers long and dimly ere it die,
Tarried and would not pass, but fitfully
Flickered and flared and paled and flared again,—
Lo, those mysterious messengers of pain,
Dumb formless fears, were they not verified ?
And lo, that voyage o'er the waters wide,
Was it not vain and a most empty thing ?
And what might now the years avail to bring,
But hopes that barren live and barren die ?

Thus did his heart with many an inward sigh
Ask of itself, though answer there was none
To be returned : and so the day, begun

Tristfully, trailed an ever wearier wing;
Till toward night another questioning
Like a strange voice from far beset his soul:
And as a low wind wails for very dole
About a tarn whereof the listless wave
Maketh no answer to its plaining, save
A sound that seems the phantom of its own,
So that low voice making unbidden moan
No answer got, saving the many sighs
Its echoes; and in this reproachful wise,
Heaping new pain on him disconsolate,
The low voice spake and spake, importunate:
O Prince that wast and wanderer that art,
Say doth love live within thy hidden heart
(*Love born of dream but nurtured wakingly*)
Ev'n as that Once when thy soul's eyes did see
Love's visible self, and worshipt? Or hast thou
Fall'n from thy faith in Her and Love ere now,
And is thy passion as a robe outworn?
Nay, love forbid! Yet wherefore art thou lorn
Of hope and peace if Love be still thine own?
For, were the wondrous vision thou hast known
Indeed Love's voice and Fate's (*which are the same*)
Then, even as surely as the vision came,
So surely shall it be fulfilled, if faith
Abide in thee; but if thy spirit saith

Treason of Love or Fate, and unbelief
House in thy heart, then surely shall swift grief
Find thee, and hope (that should be as a breath
Of song ündying) shall even die the death,
And thou thyself the death-in-life shalt see,
O Prince that wast, O wanderer that shalt be!

So spake the Voice. And in the pauses of
That secret Voice there 'gan to wake and move,
Deep in his heart, a thing of blackest ill—
The shapeless shadow men call Doubt, until
That hour all unacquainted with his soul:
And being tormented sore of this new dole,
There came on him a longing to explore
That sleep-discovered flowery land once more,
Isled in the dark of the soul; for he did deem
That were he once again to dream The Dream,
His faith new-stablished would stand, and be
No longer vext of this infirmity.
And so that night, ere lying down to sleep,
There came on him, half making him to weep
And half to laugh that such a thing should be,
A mad conceit and antic fantasy
(And yet more sad than merry was the whim)
To crave this boon of Sleep, beseeching him
To send the dream of dreams most coveted.

And ere he lay him down upon his bed,
A soft sweet song was born within his thought;
But if he sang the song, or if 'twas nought
But the soul's longing whispered to the soul,
Himself knew hardly, while the passion stole
From that still depth where passion lieth prone,
And voiced itself in this-like monotone:

'O Sleep, thou hollow sea, thou soundless sea,
Dull-breaking on the shores of haunted lands,
Lo, I am thine: do what thou wilt with me.

But while, as yet unbounden of thy bands,
I hear the breeze from inland chide and chafe
Along the margin of thy muttering sands,

Somewhat I fain would crave, if thou vouchsafe
To hear mine asking, and to heed wilt deign.
Behold, I come to fling me as a waif

Upon thy waters, O thou murmuring main!
So on some wasteful island cast not me,
Where phantom winds to phantom skies complain,

And creeping terrors crawl from out the sea,
(For such thou hast)—but o'er thy waves not cold
Bear me to yonder land once more, where She

Sits throned amidst of magic wealth untold:
Golden her palace, golden all her hair,
Golden her city 'neath a heaven of gold!

So may I see in dreams her tresses fair
Down-falling, as a wave of sunlight rests
On some white cloud, about her shoulders bare,
Nigh to the snowdrifts twain which are her breasts.'

So ran the song,—say rather, so did creep,
With drowsy faltering feet unsure, till Sleep
Himself made end of it, with no rude touch
Sealing the lips that babbled overmuch.
Howbeit the boon of boons most coveted
Withholden was, and in that vision's stead
Another Dream from its dim hold uprose,
Which he who tells the tale shall straight disclose.

PART THE FOURTH

THAT night he dreamed that over him there stole
A change miraculous, whereby his soul
Was parted from his body for a space,
And through a labyrinth of secret ways

Entered the world where dead men's ghosts abide
To seek the Seer who yestermorn had died.
And there in very truth he found the Seer,
Who gazing on him said, 'What wouldst thou here,
O royal-born, who visitest the coasts
Of darkness, and the dwellings of the ghosts?'

Then said the Prince, 'I fain would know to find
The land as yet untrod of mortal-kind
Which I beheld by gracious leave of Sleep.'
To whom the Spirit: 'O Prince, the seas are deep
And very wide betwixt thee and that land,
And who shall say how many perils stand
As armèd hosts betwixt that land and thee?
Moreover, somewhere guarded jealously,
There shines a wondrous jewel which men call
The Emerald of the Puissance Mystical;
And since thou cravest counsel, be it known
That save thou win this wondrous emerald stone,
Seeking through all the world thou shalt not find
The land thou wouldst, but easeless as the wind
Shalt wander foiled, and have no mate but Pain,
And knock at all the doors of bliss in vain.

'For in a certain land there once did dwell
(How long ago it needs not I should tell)

At the king's court a great astrologer,
Ev'n such as erst was I, but mightier
And far excelling; and it came to pass
That he fell sick; and very old he was;
And knowing that his end was nigh, he said
To him that sat in sorrow by his bed,
"O master well-beloved and matchless king,
Take thou and keep this lowly offering
In memory of thy servant"; whereupon
The king perceived it was a gem that shone
Like the sea's heart: and secret as the sea,
This word was graven in unknown charact'ry:
He that hath Me may sail where no man fares:
He that hath Me may dare what no man dares.
So the king took the graven gem betwixt
His fingers, and upon the legend fixed
His eyes, and said unto the dying Seer,
"Now who shall render this dark scripture clear
That I may know the meaning of the gift?"
And the mage oped his mouth and strove to lift
His voice, but could not, for the wished word
Clave to his rattling throat, that no man heard:
And age by age the jewel passeth down
From sire to son, and ever in the crown
It shineth of that country's kings, being called
Ev'n to this day the mystic emerald;

But no man living, be he ne'er so wise,
Hath guessed wherein its mighty virtue lies.'

'O Master,' said the Prince, 'and wilt not thou
Instruct me where to find the king that now
Weareth this jewel in his diadem?'
To whom the Spirit, 'O youth, and if the gem
Be worth the finding, is't not also worth
The little pain of seeking through the earth?—
Yet so thou may'st not wander witlessly,
Look thou forget not this I tell to thee:
When in thy journeyings thou shalt dream once more
The fateful dream thou dreamedst heretofore,
That filled thy veins as with a dancing wine,
Till all thy being brimm'd over—by that sign
Thou mayest know thyself at last to be
Within the borders of his empery
Who hath the mystic jewel; and its gleam
Shall light thee to the country of thy dream.'

'But,' said the Prince, 'when all the world's highways
My feet have trod, till after length of days
I reach the land where lies the wondrous stone,
How shall I make so rare a thing mine own?

For had I riches more than could be told,
What king would sell his jewels for my gold?'
And on this wise the answer of the Seer
Fell in the hollow of his dreaming ear:
'Behold this Iron Chain,—of power it is
To heal all manner of mortal maladies
In him that wears it round his neck but once,
Between the sun's downgoing and the sun's
Uprising: take it thou, and hold it fast
Until by seeking long thou find at last
The king that hath the mystic emerald stone:
And having found him, thou shalt e'en make known
The virtues dwelling in this charmèd chain:
Which when the king doth hear he will be fain
To have possession of so strange a thing;
And thou shalt make a bargain with the king
To give the Iron Chain in bartery
For that miraculous jewel whereof he
Knows not the secret worth. And when at last
The emerald stone in thy own hands thou hast,
Itself shall guide thee whither thou wouldst go—
Ev'n to the land revealed of Sleep, where no
Grief comes to mar their music, neither sound
Of sighing, while the golden years go round.'

So spake the spirit unto him that dreamed,
And suddenly that world of shadow seemed
To waver and labour, and its shapes to blend
And huddle: and the dream was at an end.

Then slept the Prince a deep sweet sleep that knew
Nor dream nor vision; till the dawn upgrew,
And all his soul a sudden halt did make
About the confines dim of sleep and wake,
Where wandering lights and wildered shadows meet.
But soon he rose, and leaping to his feet
Marvelled, and could in no wise understand;
For lo, the Iron Chain was in his hand!

PART THE FIFTH

So, being risen, the Prince in brief while went
Forth to the market-place, where babblement
Of them that bought and them that sold was one
Of many sounds in murmurous unison—
A buzzing as of bees about their hives,
With shriller gossiping of garrulous wives

Piping a tuneless treble thereunto :
In midst whereof he went his way as who
Looketh about him well before he buys,
To mark the manner of their merchandise ;
Till chancing upon one who cried for sale
A horse, and seeing it well-limb'd and hale,
And therewithal right goodly to behold,
He bought the beast and paid the man in gold,
And having gotten him the needful gear
Rode from the market, nothing loth to hear
Its garrulous wives no longer, and the din
Of them that daily bought and sold therein.
So from the place he passed, and slowly down
Street after street betook him till the town
Behind him and the gates before him were,
And all without was cornland green and fair.

And through the cornland wending many a mile
And through the meadowland, he came erewhile
To where the highways parted, and no man
Was nigh to tell him whitherward they ran ;
But while he halted all in doubtful mood,
An eagle, as if mourning for her brood
Stolen, above him sped with rueful cry ;
And when that he perceived the fowl to fly
Plaining aloud, unto himself he said,

'Now shall yon mournful mother overhead
Instruct the wandering of my feet, and they
Shall follow where she leadeth' : and away
The bird went winging westward clamorously,
That westward even in her wake went he.
And it may be that in his heart there stirred
Some feeling as of fellowship with the bird ;
For he, like her, was bound on a lone quest ;
And for his feet, as for her wings, no rest
Might be, but only urgence of desire,
And one far goal that seemed not ever nigher.

So through that country wended he his way,
Resting anights, till on the seventh day
He passed unwares into another land,
Whose people's speech he could not understand—
A tract o'errun with tribes barbarian,
And blood-red from the strife of man with man :
And truly 'twas a thing miraculous
That one should traverse all that rude land thus,
And no man rid him of his gold, nor raise
A hand to make abridgment of his days ;
But there was that about him could make men's
Hearts, ere they knew it, yield him reverence,—
Perchance a sovran something in his eye,
Whereat the fierce heart failed, it wist not why ;—

Perchance that Fate which (hovering like a doubt
Athwart his being) hemmed him round about,
Gloomed as a visible shadow across his way,
And made men fearful. Be this as it may,
No harm befell him in that land, and so
He came at last to where the ebb and flow
Of other seas than he had wandered o'er
Upflung to landward an attempered roar;
And wandering downward to the beach, he clomb
To topmost of a tall gray cliff, wherefrom
He saw a smoke as of men's houses, far
Off, from a jutting point peninsular
Uprising: whence he deemed that there a town
Must surely be. And so he clambered down
The cliff, and getting him again to horse
Thither along the seabound held his course,
And reached that city about sunset-tide
The smoking of whose hearths he had espied.

There at an hostel rested he, and there
Tarried the coming of the morn. But ere
He fell asleep that night, a wandering thought,
Through darkling byways of the spirit brought,
Knock'd at his soul for entrance, whispering low,
'What if to-night thou dream The Dream, and
know

To-morrow, when thou wakest from that bliss,
The land wherein thou liest to be his
Who hath the mystic jewel in his keep?'
So, full of flattering hope he fell asleep,
And sleeping dreamed, but dreamed not that he would
For at one time it seemed as if he stood
Alone upon a sterile neck of land,
Where round about him upon either hand
Was darkness, and the cry of a dark sea,
And worldwide vapours glooming thunderously
And ever as he stood, the unstable ground
Slid from beneath his feet with a great sound,
Till he could find no foothold anywhere
That seemed not unsubstantial as the air.
At otherwhiles he wandered all alone
About a lonely land, and heard a moan
As of some bird that sang and singing grieved;
And peering all about the woods thick-leaved
If so he might espy the bird, he found
At length, after long searching, that the sound
Even from the bottom of his own heart came,
And unawares his own mouth sang the same.
And then in dream 'twas like as years went by,
And still he journeyed, hardly knowing why,
Till at the last a mist about him fell,

And if the mist were death he could not tell,
For after that he knew no more. And so
He slept until the cock began to crow.

Then came the gladful morn, that sendeth sick
Dreams flying, and all shapes melancholic
That vex the slumbers of the love-distraught.
Unto his heart the merry morning brought
Cheer, and forewhisperings of some far-off rest,
When he should end in sweet that bitter quest.
But going forth that morn, and with his feet
Threading the murmurous maze of street and street,
All strangely fell upon him everywhere
The things he saw and heard of foul or fair.
The thronging of the folk that filled the ways;
The hubbub of the street and market-place;
The sound of heavy wain-wheels on the stones;
The comely faces and ill-favoured ones;
The girls with apple-cheeks and hair of gold;
The gray locks and the wrinkles of the old;—
All these remote and unfamiliar
Seem'd, and himself a something from afar,
Looking at men as shadows on the wall
And even the veriest shadow among them all.

But now when all things dreamwise seemed to swim
About the dubious eyes and ears of him,
That nothing in the world might be believed,
It chanced that on a sudden he perceived
Where one that dealt in jewels sat within
His doorway, hearkening to the outer din,
As who cared nowise to make fast his ears
Against the babble of the street-farers:
Whereat the merchant, seeing a stranger pass,
Guessed by his garb what countryman he was,
And giving him good-day right courteously
Bespake him in his mother-tongue; for he
Had wandered in his youth o'er distant seas
And knew full many lands and languages.
Wherefore with him the royal stranger fell
To talking cheerly, and besought him tell
Whence all his gems were had and costly things,
Talismans, amulets, and charmèd rings:
Whereto the other answered, They had come
Some from a country not far hence, and some
From out a land a thousand leagues away
To eastward, ev'n the birthplace of the Day,
The region of the sun's nativity;
And giving ear to this right readily,
The Prince would fain be told of him the way

To that far homeland of the youngling Day.
So, being ask'd, the other answered, 'Sir,
There liveth but one master-mariner
Whose ship hath sailed so far: and that is he
Who hither brought the jewels thou dost see.
And now, as luck will have it for the nonce,
He wills to voyage thitherward but once
Before he dies—for he is old like me—
And even this day se'nnight saileth he.
Wherefore if thou be fain to see that land,
There needeth only gold within thy hand:
For gold, if that it jingle true and clear,
Hath still a merry music for man's ear,
And where is he that hateth sound of it?'
So saying, the merchant bade the stranger sit,
But the Prince thanked him for his courtesy,
And went his way. And that day se'nnight he
Was sailing toward the far-off morningland,
And felt the skies about him like a band,
And heard the low wind uttering numerous noise,
And all the great sea singing as one voice.

PART THE SIXTH

EVEN as one voice the great sea sang. From out
The green heart of the waters round about,
Welled as a bubbling fountain silverly
The overflowing song of the great sea;
Until the Prince, by dint of listening long,
Divined the purport of that mystic song;
(For so do all things yield articulate breath
Unto his ears who rightly hearkeneth)
And, if indeed he heard that harmony
Aright, in this wise came the song of the sea.

'Behold, all ye that stricken of love do lie,
Wherefore in thraldom to a maiden's eye
Lead ye the life of bondmen and of slaves?
Lo, in the caverns and the depths of Me
A thousand mermaids dwell beneath the waves;
A thousand maidens meet for love have I,
Ev'n I, the virgin-hearted cold chaste sea.

Behold, all ye that weary of life do lie,
There is no rest at all beneath the sky

Save in the nethermost deepness of the deep.
Only the silence and the midst of Me
Can still the sleepless soul that fain would sleep ;
For such, a cool death and a sweet have I,
Ev'n I, the crystal-hearted cool sweet sea.

Behold, all ye that in my lap do lie,
To love is sweet and sweeter still to die,
And woe to him that laugheth me to scorn !
Lo, in a little while the anger of Me
Shall make him mourn the day that he was born :
For in mine hour of wrath no ruth have I,
Ev'n I, the tempest-hearted pitiless sea.'

So sang the waters, if indeed 'twere they
That sang unto the Prince's ears that day,
Since in the ship was not a soul besides
Could hear that burden of the voiceful tides ;
For when he told the sailors of this thing,
And ev'n what words the waters seemed to sing,
They stared astonishment, and some, that had
More churlish souls than others, held him mad,
And laughed before his face outright. But when
The captain heard the gossip of his men
Touching this marvel, the strange news begot
No merry mood in him, who wist not what

Should be the meaning of the miracle,
Nor whether 'twere an omen good or ill.
Wherefore the old seafarer—having heard
The tale retold with many an afterword
The mariner's own most fruitful wit supplied
To grace the telling—took the Prince aside,
And ask'd him sundry questions privily
Concerning this same singing of the sea.
So the Prince told him all there was to tell,
And when that he had heard, the old man fell
To meditating much, and shook his head
As one exceeding ill at ease, and said,
'I doubt the singing thou hast heard was no
Voice of the waters billowing below,
But rather of some evil spirit near,
Who sought with singing to beguile thine ear,
Spreading a snare to catch the soul of thee
In meshes of entangling melody,
Which taketh captive the weak minds of men.
Therefore if thou shouldst hear the sound again,
Look thou content thee not with hearkening,
But cast thine eyes around, and mark what thing
Thou seëst, and let no man know but me.'

So spake the white-haired wanderer of the sea.
And on the morrow—when the sea-line grew

O'erhazed with visible heat, and no wind blew,
And the half-stifled morning dropt aswoon
Into the panting bosom of the noon—
There came unto the Prince's ears anew
The song that yestermorn had hearkened to.
And lifting up his eyes in hope to see
What lips they were that made such melody
And filled him with the fulness of their sound,
He saw the sun at highest of his round
Show as a shield with one dark bloodstain blurred,
By reason of the body of some great bird
Like to an eagle, with wide wings outspread,
Athwart the sunfire hovering dusky red.
So to the master of the ship he told
What he had witnessed, bidding him behold
The marvel with his own eyes if he would;
Who, though he strained his vision all he could,
Yet might not once endure to look the sun
I' the face; and calling to him one by one
The whole ship's crew, he bade each mariner look
Sunward who could, but no man's eyes might brook
The glare upon them of the noontide rays
And lidless fervour of that golden gaze:
So none of them beheld the bodeful bird.

Then said the greybeard captain, hardly heard
Amid the babble of voices great and small,
'The bird thou seëst is no bird at all,
But some unholy spirit in guise of one;
And I do fear that we are all undone
If any amongst us hearken to its voice;—
For of its mouth, I doubt not, was the noise
Thou heardest as of dulcet carolling,
When at thine ear the waters seemed to sing.'

And truly, many a wiser man than he
Herein had farther strayed from verity;
For that great bird that seemed to fan the sun's
Face with its wings was even the same as once
Flew screaming westward o'er the Prince's head,
Beguiling him to follow where it fled.
And bird it was not, but a spirit of ill,
Man-hating, and of mankind hated still,
And slave to one yet mightier demon-sprite
Whose dwelling is the shadow of the night.

So the days passed, and always on the next
The bird-sprite like a baleful vision vexed
The happy-hearted sunlight; and each time
Its false sweet song was wedded to the rhyme
And chime of wind and wave—although it dropped

As honey changed to music—the Prince stopped
His ears, and would not hear ; and so the Sprite,
Seeing his charmèd songcraft of no might
Him to ensnare who hearkened not at all,
On the tenth day with dreadful noise let fall
A tempest shaken from the wings of him,
Whereat the eyes of heaven waxed thundrous-dim,
Till the day-darkness blinded them, and fell
Holding the world in night unseasonable.
And from his beakèd mouth the demon blew
A breath as of a hundred winds, and flew
Downward aswoop upon the labouring barque,
And, covered of the blear untimely Dark,
Clutch'd with his gripple claws the Prince his prey,
And backward through the tempest soared away,
Bearing that royal burden ; and his eyes
Were wandering wells of lightning to the skies.

Long time the Prince was held in swound, and knew
Nor outer world nor inner, as they flew
From darkness unto darkness ; till at last—
The fierce flight over, and his body cast
Somewhere alone in a strange place—the life
Stirred in him faintly, as at feeble strife
With covetous Death for ownership of him.

And 'fore his eyes the world began to swim
All vague, and doubtful as a dream that lies
Folded within another, petal-wise.
And therewithal himself but half believed
His own eyes' testimony, and perceived
The things that were about him as who hears
A distant music throbbing toward his ears
At noontide, in a flowery hollow of June,
And listens till he knows not if the tune
And he be one or twain, or near or far,
But only feels that sound and perfume are,
And tremulous light and leafy umbrage: so
The Prince beheld unknowing, nor fain to know.

About him was a ruinous fair place,
Which Time, who still delighteth to abase
The highest, and throw down what men do build,
With splendid prideful barrenness had filled,
And dust of immemorial dreams, and breath
Of silence, which is next of kin to death.
A weedy wilderness it seemed, that was
In days forepast a garden, but the grass
Grew now where once the flowers, and hard by
A many-throated fountain had run dry,
Which erst all day a web of rainbows wove
Out of the body of the sun its love.

And but a furlong's space beyond, there towered
In middest of that silent realm deflowered
A palace builded of black marble, whence
The shadow of a swart magnificence
Falling, upon the outer space begot
A dream of darkness when the night was not.
Which while the Prince beheld, a wonderment
Laid hold upon him, that he rose and went
Toward the palace-portico apace,
Thinking to read the riddle of the place.
And entering in (for open was the door)
From hall to hall he passed, from floor to floor,
Through all the spacious house, and (saving where
The subtle spider had his darksome lair)
No living creature could he find in it.
Howbeit, by certain writing that was writ
Upon the wall of one dark room and bare,
He guessed that some great sorcerer had there
Inhabited, a slave to his own lust
Of evil power and knowledge, till the dust
Received his dust, and darkness had his soul;
But ere death took him he had willed the whole
Of his possessions to a Spirit of Ill,
His sometime mate in commerce damnable,
Making him lord of that high house, wherein
The twain had sealed their covenant of sin.

With that a horror smote the Prince, and fain
Would he have fled that evil spirit's domain
And shook its dust from off his feet that hour.
But from a window of the topmost tower
Viewing the dim-leaved wilderness without,
Full plainly he perceived it hemmed about
With waves, an island of the middle sea,
In watery barriers bound insuperably;
And human habitation saw he none,
Nor heard one bird a-singing in the sun
To lighten the intolerable stress
Of utter undisputed silentness.

So by these signs he knew himself the thrall
Of that foul spirit unseen, and therewithal
Wholly unfellowed in captivity,
Bound round with fetters of the tyrannous sea.
And sick for very loneliness, he passed
Downward through galleries and chambers vast
To one wide hall wherefrom a vestibule
Opened into a dim green space and cool,
Where great trees grew that various fruitage bore
The like whereof he had not seen before,
And hard by was a well of water sweet;
And being an hungered he did pluck and eat

The strange fair fruit, and being athirst did drink
The water, and lay down beside the brink;
Till sleep, as one that droppeth from the skies,
Dropt down, and made a mist about his eyes.

PART THE SEVENTH

But Sleep, who makes a mist about the sense,
Doth ope the eyelids of the soul, and thence
Lifteth a heavier cloud than that whereby
He veils the vision of the fleshly eye.
And not alone by dreams doth Sleep make known
The sealèd things and covert—not alone
In *visions* of the night do mortals hear
The fatal feet and whispering wings draw near—
But dimly and in darkness doth the soul
Drink of the streams of slumber as they roll,
And win fine secrets from their waters deep:
Yea, of a truth, the spirit doth grow in sleep.

Howbeit I know not whether as he slept
A voice from out the depth of dream upleapt
And whispered in his ear; or whether he
Grew to the knowledge blindly, as a tree

Waxes from bloom to fruitage, knowing not
The manner of its growth: but this I wot,
That rising from that sleep beside the spring
The Prince had knowledge of a certain thing
Whereof he had not wist until that hour—
To wit, that two contending spirits had power
Over *his* spirit, ruling him with sway
Altern; as 'twere dominion now of Day
And now of Dark; for one was of the light,
And one was of the blackness of the night.

Now there be certain evil spirits whom
The mother of the darkness in her womb
Conceived ere darkness' self; and one of these
Did rule that island of the middle seas
Hemmed round with silence and enchantment dim.
Nothing in all the world so pleasured him
As filling human hearts with dolorousness
And banning where another sprite did bless;
But chiefly did his malice take delight
In thwarting lovers' hopes and breathing blight
Into the blossoms newly openèd
Of sweet desire, till all of sweet were fled.
And (for he knew what secret hopes did fill
The minds of men) 'twas even now his will
To step between the Prince and his desire,

Nor suffer him to fare one furlong nigher
Unto that distant-shining golden goal
That beacon'd through the darkness to his soul.

And so the days, the sultry summer days,
Went by, and wimpled over with fine haze
The noiseless nights stole after them, as steals
The moon-made shadow at some traveller's heels.
And day by day and night by night the Prince
Dwelt in that island of enchantment, since
The hour when Evil Hap, in likeness of
An eagle swooping from the clouds above,
Did bind him body and soul unto that place.
And in due time the summer waxed apace,
And in due time the summer waned: and now
The withered leaf had fallen from the bough,
And now the winter came and now the spring;
Yea, summer's self was toward on the wing
From wandering overseas: and all this while
The Prince abode in that enchanted isle,
Marvelling much at Fortune and her ways.

And by degrees the slowly-sliding days
Gathered themselves together into years,
And oftentimes his spirit welled in tears
From dawn to darkness and from dark to dawn,

By reason of the light of life withdrawn.
And if the night brought sleep, a fitful sleep,
The phantoms of a buried time would creep
Out of their hollow hiding-places vast,
Peopling his Present from the wizard Past.
Sometimes between the whirl of dream and dream,
All in a doubtful middle-world, a gleam
Went shivering past him through the chill grey space,
And lo, he knew it for his mother's face,
And wept; and all the silence where he stood
Wept with him. And at times the dreamer would
Dream himself back beneath his father's roof
At eventide, and there would hold aloof
In silence, clothed upon with shadows dim,
To hear if any spake concerning him;
But the hours came and went and went and came
And no man's mouth did ever name his name.
And year by year he saw the queen and king
Wax older, and beheld a shadowy thing
Lurking behind them, till it came between
His dreamsight and the semblance of the queen,
From which time forth he saw her not: and when
Another year had been it came again,
And after that he saw his sire the king
No more, by reason of the shadowy thing

Stepping between ; and all the place became
As darkness, and the echo of a name.

. . . . . .

What need to loiter o'er the chronicle
Of days that brought no change ? What boots it
tell
The tale of hours whereof each moment was
As like its fellow as one blade of grass
Is to another, when the dew doth fall
Without respect of any amongst them all ?
Enow that time in that enchanted air
Nor slept nor tarried more than otherwhere,
And so at last the captive lived to see
The fiftieth year of his captivity.
And on a day within that fiftieth year
He wandered down unto the beach, to hear
The breaking of the breakers on the shore,
As he had heard them ofttimes heretofore
In days when he would sit and watch the sea,
If peradventure there some ship might be.
But now his soul no longer yearned as then
To win her way back to the world of men :
For what could now his freedom profit him ?
The hope that filled youth's beaker to its brim
The tremulous hand of age had long outspilled,
And whence might now the vessel be refilled ?

Moreover, after length of days and years
The soul had ceased to beat her barriers,
And like a freeborn bird that cagèd sings
Had grown at last forgetful of her wings.

And so he took his way toward the sea—
Not, as in former days, if haply he
Might spy some ship upon the nether blue,
And beckon with his hands unto the crew,
But rather with an easeful heart to hear
What things the waves might whisper to his ear
Of counsel wise and comfortable speech.
But while he walked about the yellow beach,
There came upon his limbs an heaviness,
For languor of the sultry time's excess;
And so he lay him down under a tree
That leaned back from the wave, and there the sea
Sang him to sleep. And sleeping thus he dreamed
A dream of very wonderment: him seemed,
The spirit that half an hundred years before
In likeness of an eagle came and bore
His body to that island on a day,
Came yet again and found him where he lay,
And taking him betwixt his talons flew
O'er seas and far-off countries, till they drew
Nigh to a city that was built between

Twin mountains in a pleasant land and green ;
And there upon the higher mountain's top
The bird that was no bird at all let drop
Its burthen, and was seen of him no more.

Thereat he waked, and issuing from the door
Of dream did marvel in his heart ; because
He found he had but dreamed the thing that was :
For there, assuredly, was neither sea
Nor Isle Enchanted ; and assuredly
He sat upon the peak of a great hill ;
And far below him, looking strangely still,
Uptowered a city exceeding fair to ken,
And murmurous with multitude of men.

PART THE EIGHTH

Now as it chanced, the day was almost spent
When down the lonely mountain-side he went,
The whitehaired man, the Prince that was ; and ere
He won the silence of the valley where
The city's many towers uprose, the gate
Was closed against him, for the hour was late.

So even as they that have not wherewithal
To roof them from the rain if it should fall,
Upon the grassy ground this king's son lay,
And slept till nigh the coming of the day.

But while as any vagabond he slept
Or outcast from the homes of men, there crept
Unto him lying in such sorry sort
A something fairer than the kingliest court
In all the peopled world had witness of—
Even the shadow of the throne of Love,
That from a height beyond all height did creep
Along the pavement of the halls of sleep.
O fair and wonderful! that shadow was
The golden dream of dreams that came across
His youth, full half an hundred years before,
And sent him wandering through the world. Once more
In a lone boat that sails and oars had none,
Midmost a land of summer and the sun
Where nothing was that was not fair to see,
Adown a gliding river glided he,
And saw the city that was built thereby,
And saw the chariot of the queen draw nigh,
And gazed upon her in the goodly street;
Whereat he waked and rose upon his feet,

Remembering the Vision of the Seer,
And what the spirit spake unto his ear:
'When in thy wanderings thou shalt dream once more
The fateful dream thou dreamedst heretofore,
That filled thy veins as with a dancing wine
Till all thy being brimm'd over—by that sign
Thou mayest know thyself at last to be
Within the borders of his empery
Who hath the mystic emerald; and its gleam
Shall light thee to the country of thy dream.'

Then rose the heart within his heart and said:
'O bitter scornful Fate, in days long dead
I asked and thou denied'st mine asking: now
The boon can nowise profit me, and thou
Dost mock me with bestowal!' Thereupon
He fell to thinking of his youthhood gone,
And wept. For now the goal, the longtime-sought,
Was even at hand, 'But how shall I,' he thought,
'I that am old and sad and hoary-haired,
Enter the place for youth and love prepared?
For in my veins the wellspring of desire
Hath failed, and in mine heart the golden fire
Burneth no more for ever. I draw near
The night that is about our day, and hear

The sighing of the darkness as I go,
Whose ancient secret there is none doth know.'

Ev'n so to his own heart he spake full sad,
And many and bitter were the thoughts he had
Of days that were and days that were to be.
But now the East was big with dawn, and he
Drew nigh the city gates and entered in,
Ere yet the place remurmured with the din
Of voices and the tread of human feet;
And going up the void and silent street,
All in the chill gleam of the new-lit air,
A Thought found way into his soul, and there
Abode and grew, and in brief while became
Desire, and quickened to a quenchless flame:
And holding converse with himself, he said,
'Though in my heart the heart's desire be dead,
And can no more these time-stilled pulses move;
Though Death were lovelier to these eyes than Love,
Yet would these eyes behold, or ere I pass,
The land that mirror'd lay as in a glass
In the deep wells of dream. And her that is
The sunlight of that city of all bliss,
Her would I fain see once with waking eyes
Whom sleep hath rendered unto vision twice.

And having seen her beauty I would go
My way, even to the river which doth flow
From daylight unto darkness and the place
Of Silence, where the ghosts are face to face.'

So mused the man, and evermore his thought
Gave him no peace. Wherefore next morn he sought
The palace of the king, but on his way
Tarried till nigh the middle of the day
In talk with certain of the city-folk;
Whereby he learned, if that were true they spoke,
How that the king their lord was nigh distract
With torture of a strange disease that racked
Each day his anguished body more and more,
Setting at naught the leeches and their lore.
Which having heard he went before the king,
Who sat upon his throne, delivering
Judgment, his body pierced the while with pain.
And taking from his neck the charmèd chain
Which he had borne about him ever since
That morn miraculous, the unknown Prince
Upspake and said, 'O king, I hold within
My hand a wonder-working medicine,
Of power to make thee whole if thou wilt deign
So to be healèd'; and he held the chain

Aloft, and straightway told unto the king
The passing worth and wonder of the thing.

Then he that heard stretched forth a hand that shook
With sudden fever of half-hope, and took
The chain, and turned it over in his hand
Until his eyes had left no link unscanned.
And on each separate link was character'd
A language that no living ear had heard,
Occult, of secret import, mystic, strange.
Then said the king, 'What wouldst thou in exchange
For this the magic metal thou dost bring?'
And the Prince answered him and said, 'O king,
Even the emerald stone which some do call
The Emerald of the Puissance Mystical.'
And they who thronged the hall of judgment were
Astonished at the stranger who could dare
Ask such a boon; and some base mouths did curl
With sneers, churl whispering to his fellow-churl,
'Who could have deemed the man so covetous,
So void of shame in his great greed?' For thus
It shall be ever underneath the sun,
Each man believing that high hearts are none
Whose own is as the dust he treads on low.

But the king answered saying, 'Be it so.
To-night this chain of iron shall be worn
About my neck, and on the morrow-morn,
If all the pain have left these limbs of mine,
The guerdon thou demandest shall be thine.
But if this torment still tormenteth me,
Thy head and shoulders shall part company,
And both be cast uncoffin'd to the worms.
Open thy mouth and answer if these terms
Content thee.' And aloud the Prince replied,
'With these conditions I am satisfied':
Whereafter, rising from his knees, he went
Out from before the king, and was content.

Next morning, when the king awoke, I wis
No heart was lighter in the land than his;
For all the grievous burden of his pains
Had fall'n from off his limbs, and in his veins
Upleapt the glad new life, and the sick soul
Seemed like its body all at once made whole.
But hardly was the king uprisen before
There knocked and entered at the chamber-door
His chief physician (a right skilful leech,
But given to hollow trickeries of speech,
And artful ways and wiles), who said, 'O king,
Be not deceived, I pray thee. One good thing

Comes of another, like from like. The weed
Beareth not lilies, neither do apes breed
Antelopes. Thou art healèd of thy pain
Not by the wearing of an iron chain—
An iron chain forsooth!'—(hereat he laughed
As 'twere a huge rare jest) 'but by the draught
Which I prepared for thee with mine own hands
From certain precious simples grown in lands
It irks me tell how many leagues away:
Which medicine thou tookest yesterday.'

Then said the king, 'O false and jealous man,
Who lovest better thine own praises than
Thy master's welfare! Little 'tis to such
As thou that I should be made whole; but much
That men should go before thee, trumpeting
"Behold the man that cured our lord the king."'
And he was sore displeased and in no mood
To hearken. But the chief physician stood
Unmoved amid this hail of kingly scorn,
With meek face martyr-like, as who hath borne
Much in the name of Truth, and much can bear.
And from the mouth of him false words and fair
So cunningly flowed that in a little while
The royal frown became a royal smile,

And the king hearkened to the leech and was
Persuaded. So that morn it came to pass
That when the Prince appeared before the throne
To claim his rightful meed, the emerald stone,
The king denied his title to receive
The jewel, saying, 'Think'st thou I believe
Yon jingling chain hath healed my body? Nay;
For whatsoever such as thou may say
I am not found so easy to beguile:
As for the gem thou wouldest, this good while
It hath adorned the crown I wear, nor shall
The stone be parted from the coronal.'

Scarce had the false king spoken when behold
Through the high ceiling's goodly fretted gold
A sudden shaft of lightning downward sped
And smote the golden crown upon his head,
Yea, melted ev'n as wax the golden crown.
And from the molten metal there fell down
A grassgreen Splendour, and the Emerald Stone
Tumbled from step to step before the throne,
And lay all moveless at the Prince's feet!
And the king sat upon his royal seat
A dead king, marble-mute: but no man stirred
Or spake: and only silence might be heard.

Then he before whose feet the gem did lie
Said not a word to any man thereby,
But stooped and lifted it from off the floor,
And passing outward from the open door
Put the mysterious jewel in his breast
And went his way, none daring to molest
The stranger. For the whisper rose and ran,
'Is not the lightning leaguèd with this man?'

PART THE NINTH

And passing through the city he went out
Into the fat fields lying thereabout,
And lo, the spirit of the emerald stone
With secret influence to himself unknown
Guided the wandering of his errant feet,
The servants of the errant soul; and sweet
The meadows were, with babble of birds, and noise
Of brooks, the water's voice and the wind's voice.
Howbeit he gave small heed to any of them;
And now the subtle spirit of the gem
Led him along a winding way that ran
Beyond the fields to where the woods began

To spread green matwork for the mountains' feet;
A region where the Silence had her seat
And hearkened to the sounds that only she
Can hear—the fall of dew on herb and tree;
The voice of the growing of the grass; the night
Down-fluttering breathless from the heaven's height;
And autumn whispering unawares at times
Strange secrets and dark sayings, wrapt in rhymes
Wind-won from forest branches. At this place
The old man rested for a little space,
Forgetful that the day was wellnigh flown:
But soon the urgent spirit of the stone
Itself re-entered and possessed anew
His soul; and led thereby, and wandering through
A mile of trackless and untrodden ground,
By favour of the rising moon he found
A rude path, broken here and there by rills
Which crossed it as they hurried from the hills;
And going whitherso the wild path went,
A two hours' journeying brought him, nigh forspent
With toiling upwards, to a mountain pass,
A bleak lone place where no trees grew nor grass,
But on each hand a peak of rock, high-reared,
Uprose: afar the two like horns appeared

Of some great beast, so tapering-tall they were.
And now with forward gaze the wanderer
Stood where the pass was highest and the track
Went downward both ways; and behind his back
The full moon shone, and lo, before his face
The bright sea glimmered at the mountain's base.
It seemed, what way soever he might turn,
His fate still led him to that watery bourn.

So journeying down the track which lay before,
He came, an hour past midnight, to the shore,
And, looking backward, far above espied
The two sharp peaks, one peak on either side
Of that lone pass; verily like a pair
Of monstrous horns, the tips far-seen, up there:
And in the nether space betwixt the two,
A single monstrous eye, the moon shone through.

Now all this while the spirit of the stone
Had led him forward, he, the old man lone,
Taking no thought of whither he was bound.
And roaming now along the beach he found
A creek, and in the creek, some little way
From where it joined the sea, a pinnace lay
Moored at the marge; and stepping thereinto
He sat him down, and from his bosom drew

The mystic gem, and placed it at the prow,
That he might watch its paly splendours, how
They lightened here and there, and flashed aflame,
Mocked at the moon and put the stars to shame.
But hardly was the stone out of his hand,
When the boat wrenched her moorings from the land,
And swift as any captive bird set free
Shot o'er the shimmering surface of the sea,
The spirit of the emerald guiding her ;
And for a time the old man could not stir
For very greatness of astonishment.

But merrily o'er the moonlit waters went
The pinnace, till the land was out of sight,
Far in the dreaming distance. All that night,
Faster than ever wind in winter blew,
Faster than quarrel flies the bow, she flew.
A moment was a league in that wild flight
From vast to vast of ocean and the night.
And now the moon her lanthorn had withdrawn :
And now the pale weak heralds of the dawn
Lifted the lids of their blear eyes afar :
The last belated straggler of a star
Went home ; and in her season due the morn
Brake on a cold and silent sea forlorn—

A strange mute sea, where never wave hath stirred,
Nor sound of any wandering wind is heard,
Nor song of sailors sailing merrily :
A sea untraversed, an enchanted sea
From all the world fate-folden ; hemmed about
Of linkèd Dreams ; encompassed with a Doubt.

But not the less for lack of wind went she,
The flying pinnace, o'er that silent sea,
Till those dull waters of enchantment lay
Behind her many a league. And now her way
Was toward a shining tract of ocean, where
Low winds with bland breath flattered the mild air,
And low waves did together clasp and close,
And skyward yearning from the sea there rose
And seaward yearning from the sky there fell
A Spirit of Deep Content Unspeakable :
So midway meeting betwixt sky and sea,
These twain are married for eternity,
And rule the spirits of that Deep, and share
The lordship of the legions of the air.

Here winds but came to rest them from their wars
With far seas waged. Here darkness had her stars
Always, a nightly multitudinous birth.

And entering on this happier zone of earth,
The boat 'gan bate her speed, and by degrees
Tempered her motion to the tranquil seas,
As if she knew the land not far ahead,
The port not far : so forward piloted
By that sweet spirit and strong, she held her way
Unveering. And a little past midday,
The wanderer lifted up his eyes, and right
Before him saw what seemed a great wall, white
As alabaster, builded o'er the sea,
High as the heaven ; but drawing nearer he
Perceived it was a mighty mist that lay
Upon the ocean, stretching far away
Northward and southward, and the sun appeared
Powerless to melt its mass. And while he neared
This cloudy barrier stretching north and south,
A tale once told him by his mother's mouth,
In childhood, while he sat upon her knee,
Rose to remembrance : *how that on the sea*
Sat somewhere a Great Mist which no sun's heat
Could melt, nor wind make wander from its seat.
So great it was, the fastest ship would need
Seven days to compass it, with all her speed.
And they of deepest lore and wisest wit
Deemed that an island in the midst of it
Bloomed like a rosebush ring'd with snows, a place

Of pleasance, folded in that white embrace
And chill. But never yet would pilot steer
Into the fog that wrapped it round, for fear
Of running blindfold in that sightless mist
On sunken reefs whereof no mariner wist:
And so from all the world this happy isle
Lay hidden. Thus the queen, long since; and while
He marvelled if the mist before his ken
Could be the same she told of—even then,
Hardly a furlong 'fore the pinnace' prow
It lay: and now 'twas hard at hand: and now
The boat had swept into the folds of it!
But all that vision of white darkness—lit
By the full splendour of the emerald stone
That from the forepart of the pinnace shone—
Melted around her, as in sunder cleft
By that strong spirit of light; and there was left
A wandering space, behind her and before,
Of radiance, roofed and walled with mist, the floor
A liquid pavement large. And so she passed
Through twilight immemorial, and at last
Issued upon the other side, where lay
The land no mortal knew before that day.

There wilding orchards faced the beach, and bare
All manner of delicious fruit and rare,

Such as in gárdens of kings' palaces
Trembles upon the sultry-scented trees,
The soul of many sunbeams at its core.
Well-pleased the wanderer landed on this shore,
Beholding all its pleasantness, how sweet
And soft, to the tired soul, to the tired feet.
And so he sat him down beneath the boughs,
And there a low wind seemed to drone and drowse
Among the leaves as it were gone astray
And like to faint forwearied by the way ;
Till the persistence of the sound begat
An heaviness within him as he sat :
So when Sleep chanced to come that way, he found
A captive not unwilling to be bound,
And on his body those fine shackles put
Wherewith he bindeth mortals hand and foot.

When the tired sleeper oped again his eyes,
'Twas early morn, and he beheld the skies
Glowing from those deep hours of rest and dew
Wherein all creatures do themselves renew.
The laughing leaves blink'd in the sun, throughout
Those dewy realms of orchard thereabout ;
But green fields lay beyond, and farther still,
Betwixt them and the sun, a great high hill
Kept these in shadow, and the brighter made

The fruitlands look for all that neighbouring shade.
And he the solitary man uprose,
His face toward the mountain beyond those
Fair fields not yet acquainted with the sun ;
And crossed the fields, and climbed the hill, and won
The top ; and journeying down the eastern side
Entered upon a grassy vale and wide,
Where in the midst a pure stream ran, as yet
A youngling, hardly able to forget
The lofty place of its nativity,
Nor lusting yet for union with the sea.
And through this valley, taking for his guide
The stream, and walking by the waterside,
He wandered on, but had at whiles to ford
The lesser brooks that from the mountain poured
Into this greater ; which by slow degrees,
Enlarged with such continual soft increase,
Became a river broad and fair, but still
As clear as when it flowed a mountain-rill :
And he the wanderer wandering by that stream
Saw 'twas the river he had known in dream.

So day by day he journeyed ; and it chanced
One day he fared till night was well advanced
Ere lying down to sleep ; and when he waked
Next morn, his bones and all his body ached,

And on his temples lay a weary heat,
And with sore pain he gat upon his feet.
Yet when he rose and hard at hand espied
The City sloping to the riverside,
With wan white walls and golden port agleam,
Such as he saw them figured in the dream—
Then the blood leapt as fire along his veins
And the o'erwearied limbs forgat their pains.
But when he strove to make what speed he might
Toward the happy haven full in sight,
The feet that would have hastened thereunto
Could not; and heavily, as old men do,
He fell to earth, and groaned aloud and said,
'Old man, what wouldst thou, with thy silvered head,
Yonder, where all their tresses be as gold
For ever?—Thou art suffered to behold
The city of thy search; what wilt thou more?
Tarry thou here upon this river shore;
Thou mightest farther go nor find the grass
Greener whereon to lay thy head, and pass
Into the deep dark populous empty land.'

So spake the man, not able to withstand
This dumb remonstrance of the flesh, now first
Thwarting the soul. Howbeit a mighty thirst
Consumed him, and he crawled unto the brink

Of the clear stream hard by, that he might drink
One draught thereof, and with the water still
His deep desire. When lo, a miracle!
No sooner had he drunken than his whole
Body was changed and did from crown to sole
The likeness of its youthful self put on,
The Prince of half-an-hundred years agone,
Wearing the very garments that he wore
What time his years were but a single score.

Then he remembered how that in The Dream
One told him of the marvel of that stream,
Whose waters are a well of youth eterne.
And night and day its crystal heart doth yearn
To wed its youth unto the sea's old age;
And faring on that bridal pilgrimage,
Its waters past the shining city are rolled,
And all the people drink and wax not old.

PART THE TENTH

That night within the City of Youth there stood
Musicians playing to the multitude
On many a gold and silver instrument
Whose differing souls yet chimed in glad consent.

And sooth-tongued singers, throated like the bird
All darkness holds its breath to hear, were heard
Chanting aloud before the comely folk,
Chanting aloud till none for listening spoke,
Chanting aloud that all the city rang;
And whoso will may hear the song they sang:—

I

O happy hearts, O youths and damsels, pray
What new and wondrous thing hath chanced to-day,
O happy hearts, what wondrous thing and new?
Set the gold sun with kinglier-mightful glance,
Rose the maid-moon with queenlier countenance,
Came the stars forth a merrier madder crew,
Than ever sun or maiden-moon before,
Or jostling stars that shook the darkness' floor
With night-wide tremor 'neath their dizzy dance?

Strong is the Sun, but strong alway was he;
The Moon is fair, but fair of old was she;
The Stars are many, and who hath known them few?
As now they be, so heretofore were they:
What is the wondrous thing hath chanced to-day,
O happy hearts, the wondrous thing and new,
Whereof ye are glad together even more

Than of the sunlight or the moonlight or
The light o' the stars that strow the milky-way?

For all your many maidens have the head
In goodly festal-wise engarlanded,
With flowers at noon the banquet of the bees,
And leaves that in some grove at mid-day grew:
And ever since the falling of the dew
Your streets are full of pomps and pageantries,
Laughter and song, feasting and dancing:—nay,
Surely some wondrous thing hath chanced to-day;
O happy hearts, what wondrous thing and new?

II

No, no, ye need not answer any word!
Heard have we all—who lives and hath not heard?—
What thing the sovran Fates have done to-day;
Who turn the tides of life which way they please,
And sit themselves aloft, aloof, at ease:
Dwellers in courts of marble silence they.
No need to ask what thing the Fates have done
Between the sunrise and the set of sun,
Mute-moving in their twilight fastnesses!

Changeless, aloft, aloof, mute-moving, dim,
In ancient fastnesses of twilight—him

Have they not sent this day, the long-foretold,
The long-foretold and much-desired, of whom
'Twas whilom written in the rolls of doom
How in a dream he should this land behold,
And hither come from worldwide wandering,
Hither where all the folk should hail him king,
Our king foredestined from his mother's womb ?

Long time he tarried, but the time is past,
And he hath come ye waited for, at last :
The long-foretold, the much-desired, hath come.
And ye have bidden your minstrels noise abroad
With lyre and tongue your joyance and his laud,
And, sooth to say, the minstrels are not dumb.
And in the pauses of our minstrelsy,
So filled with fulness of delight are ye,
We hear the beating of your hearts applaud !

III

And she our Queen—ah, who shall tell what hours
She bode his coming in her palace-towers,
Unmated she in all the land alone ?
'Twas yours, O youths and maids, to clasp and kiss ;
Desiring and desired ye had your bliss :
The Queen she sat upon her loveless throne.
Sleeping she saw his face, but could not find

Its phantom's phantom when she waked, nor wind
About her finger one gold hair of his.

Often when evening sobered all the air,
No doubt but she would sit and marvel where
He tarried, by the bounds of what strange sea ;
And peradventure look at intervals
Forth of the windows of her palace walls,
And watch the gloaming darken fount and tree ;
And think on twilight shores, with dreaming caves
Full of the groping of bewildered waves,
Full of the murmur of their hollow halls.

As flowers desire the kisses of the rain,
She his, and many a year desired in vain :
She waits no more who waited long and well.
Nor listeth he to wander any more
Who wandered with the winds from sea to shore,
From shore to sea, till lovelier fate befell.
The winds do seek a place of rest ; the flowers
Look for the rain ; but in a while the showers
Come, and the winds lie down, their wanderings o'er.

EARLY POEMS

A SONG OF THREE SINGERS

I

Wave and wind and willow-tree
Speak a speech that no man knoweth ;
Tree that sigheth, wind that bloweth,
Wave that floweth to the sea :
Wave and wind and willow-tree.

Peerless perfect poets ye,
Singing songs all songs excelling,
Fine as crystal music dwelling
In a welling fountain free :
Peerless perfect poets three !

II

Wave and wind and willow-tree
Know not aught of poets' rhyming,
Yet they make a silver-chiming
Sunward-climbing minstrelsy,
Soother than all songs that be.

A SONG OF THREE SINGERS

Blows the wind it knows not why,
Flows the wave it knows not whither,
And the willow swayeth hither
Swayeth thither witlessly,
Nothing knowing save to sigh.

VANISHINGS

As one whose eyes have watched the stricken day
Swoon to its crimson death adown the sea,
Turning his face to eastward suddenly
Sees a lack-lustre world all chill and gray,—
Then, wandering sunless whitherso he may,
Feels the first dubious dumb obscurity,
And vague foregloomings of the Dark to be,
Close like a sadness round his glimmering way ;
So I, from drifting dreambound on and on
About strange isles of utter bliss, in seas
Whose waves are unimagined melodies,
Rose and beheld the dreamless world anew :
Sad were the fields, and dim with splendours gone
The strait sky-glimpses fugitive and few.

BEETHOVEN

O MASTER, if immortals suffer aught
Of sadness like to ours, and in like sighs
And with like overflow of darkened eyes
Disburden them, I know not; but methought,
What time to-day mine ear the utterance caught
Whereby in manifold melodious wise
Thy heart's unrestful infelicities
Rose like a sea with easeless winds distraught,
That thine seemed angel's grieving, as of one
Strayed somewhere out of heaven, and uttering
Lone moan and alien wail: because he hath
Failed to remember the remounting path,
And singing, weeping, can but weep and sing
Ever, through vasts forgotten of the sun.

THE QUESTIONER

I ASKED of heaven and earth and sea,
Saying : 'O wondrous trinity,
Deign to make answer unto me,
And tell me truly what ye be.'
And they made answer : 'Verily,
The mask before His face are we,
Because 'tis writ no man can see
His face and live' ;—so spake the three.
Then I : 'O wondrous trinity,
A mask is but a mockery—
Make answer yet again to me
And tell if aught besides are ye.'
And they made answer : 'Verily,
The robe around His form are we,
That sick and sore mortality
May touch its hem and healèd be.'
Then I : 'O wondrous trinity,
Vouchsafe once more to answer me,
And tell me truly, what is He

Whose very mask and raiment ye ?'
But they replied : ' Of Time are we,
And of Eternity is He ;
Wait thou, and ask Eternity.

EARLY POEMS

CHANGED VOICES

Last night the sea-wind was to me
A metaphor of liberty,
  And every wave along the beach
A starlit music seemed to be.

To-day the sea-wind is to me
A fettered soul that would be free,
  And dumbly striving after speech
The tides yearn landward painfully.

To-morrow how shall sound for me
The changing voice of wind and sea?
  What tidings shall be borne of each?
What rumour of what mystery?

THE END.

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